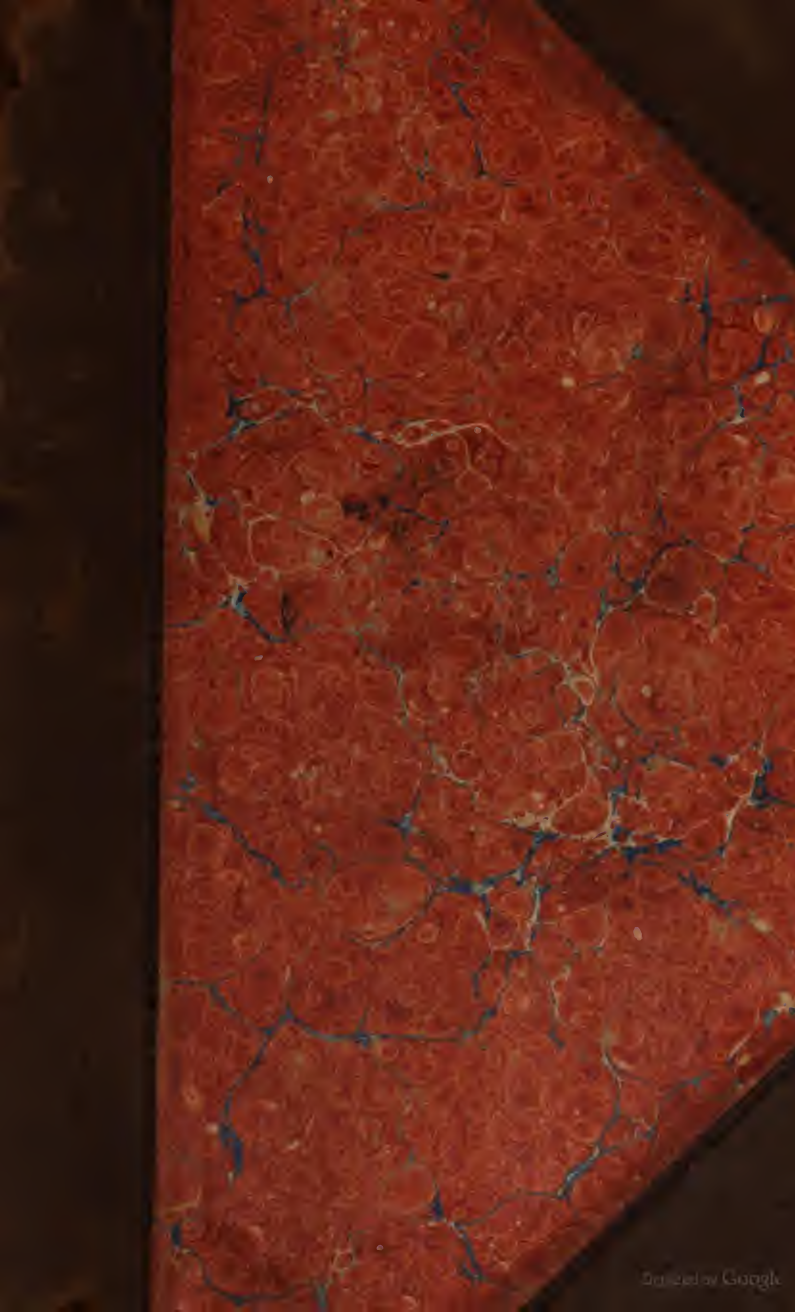




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THE  
S A N C T U A R Y  
AND THE 2.  
ORATORY;

OR,  
ILLUSTRATIONS AND RECORDS OF  
DEVOTIONAL DUTY.

BY THE  
REV. THOMAS MILNER, M.A.

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Dr. I. Watts,"*

Τῷ Θεῷ προσκύνησον.



LONDON:  
WILLIAM BALL, ALDINE CHAMBERS,  
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

M.DCCC.XXXVII.

186.

LONDON :  
R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL,  
DOCTORS' COMMONS.

THE following pages are designed to communicate some little information upon the chief branches of devotional duty—to record the conduct of eminent members of the church, with reference to them—and to advance those motives which are calculated to promote a scrupulous attention to the offices of piety.

If this end be in any instance attained, the Writer will be amply recompensed for the time and attention devoted to the composition of this volume.

NORTHAMPTON,  
*January 6, 1837.*

TO  
CHARLES CHESTER MORT, ESQ.

---

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I INSCRIBE this Volume to you,  
in remembrance of many happy hours in the  
past, which I hope have tended to prepare both  
of us for the realities of the future.

I am

Your affectionate Friend,

THOMAS MILNER.



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Infant, born the world to free,  
    Look on us !  
That, in child-like wisdom, we  
May put on thy humility.  
Thou, that midst the beasts didst sleep,  
    Helpless Babe !  
From dark beasts that seek thy sheep,  
Sacred Shepherd, save and keep.  
Thou, who hast thy Godhead laid  
    All aside,  
On the breast of mother maid,  
To our weakness lend thine aid.  
To Thee, opening heavenly door,  
    Virgin-born !  
To Three in One, whom we adore,  
Glory be for evermore.

*From the Parisian Breviary.*

# THE SANCTUARY AND THE ORATORY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FIRST DAYS OF THE SON OF MAN.

It is recorded in the history of our Lord, that, to humble the pride, and moderate the ambition of his disciples, he “called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.”\* The action was singularly beautiful, significant, and instructive. Painters have usually represented the Lord of life and glory sitting down upon the occasion, with those aspects of majesty, meekness, and grace, so characteristic of him, strongly expressed in his countenance and attitude: the twelve ambassadors to the world are standing in a circle around him, watching with the intensest interest the procedure of their Master; and already a consciousness of fault, a sense of shame, begins to appear upon their features: in the middle of the group is the little one, the silent yet effective preacher, struggling with contending feelings of bashfulness, wonder, and pleasure, at being

\* Matt. xviii. 2.

the object of so much attention. By this symbolical action, the followers of the Saviour, who had been lusting after the pomps and pageants, the dignities and honours of earthly empire, were impressively rebuked. They were taught, that to enjoy the favour of their Lord, theirs must be the simplicity, the guilelessness, the utter freedom from worldly ambition, and desire of power and fame, even of "babes and sucklings;" that to stoop low is the way to rise high: and the instructive lesson was still further inculcated in this circumstance, that kindness, benignity, and tender attentions, should always mark the intercourse of maturity with childhood. The admonition which the presence of the young and innocent stranger called forth and enforced, was worthy of the benevolent character of Christ; it is a beautiful enunciation of the spirit of his divine religion—it appeals to the sweetest and most powerful sympathies of our nature—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones."\*

Except to the ignorant, the affected, and the morose, "the child set in the midst of us" has a thousand charms to attract our attention, interest our feelings, and engage our affections. It is the age of energy and animation, as yet undamped by any sad experience or prophetic insight into the care and troubles of the world. The buoyant spirits, the ready and unsuspecting confidence of children, render them objects of delightful contemplation; theirs is the wild, unwearied glee, the mirth so easily

\* Matt. xviii. 10.

excited, the love so readily won—danger is unsuspected, taint incomprehensible—the vocabulary of sin is as yet an unknown tongue—and, gazing upon them in their helplessness and inexperience, we feel how perfectly natural as well as amiable was that sentiment, which came from the kindest heart that ever throbbed within a human frame, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.”

There are, however, associations which the thoughtful mind will connect with infancy and childhood, which excite a deep, a powerful, and a mournful interest within us. There is a mystery about the fate of the bright and beautiful child on whose face we gaze, or to whose accents we listen, which is oftentimes painfully oppressive: the reflection, that “it doth not yet appear what it shall be,” sometimes strikes a sickening sadness to the heart; and the looking forward to what the day of mortal life will unfold—a habit which may be unwisely indulged, but to which we are prone,—induces a train of melancholy musing. Perhaps before the trembler can leave the maternal bosom, or before its powers of thought and action have attained even their youthful development, it may be seized by the hand of death; and then there is the mysterious, and to us, incomprehensible fact to absorb our notice—that this spark of life and intellect should be struck to sparkle for a moment to our gaze, and then expire. But if the history of threescore years and ten should be permitted to unfold its successive

chapters, the probability awakens our liveliest sympathies, that some parts of the volume will be written in "lamentation, mourning, and woe." There may be poverty, with its pressing wants and frequent fears; sickness, with its pining look and tortured frame; disappointment, with its stinging reverse and clouded future; bereavement, with its starting sigh and bitter tear, to change the aspect of the now care-free brow and rapture-beaming countenance, and impress the sterner and more distinctly defined features of anxiety, dejection, and grief. We almost shudder to think of the change that will be wrought in character, feeling, and experience, by the lapse of years—the flight of a few short cycles of time. How soon will the sublime simplicity, the holy ignorance, the adorable ingenuousness, the beautiful credulity, which invests childhood with something of the sanctity which belongs to celestial natures, vanish before the sombre truths, the killing cold, the stern realities of the world! Now there is innocence, thinking no ill; ignorance, unconscious of its existence; hope, suspecting no blight; love, apprehending no guile. And these gentle spirits will be banished from the holy temple of the child's imagination, and in their place there will come doubt, jealous of confidence; fear, poisoning enjoyment; reason, dispelling illusion; and the fruit of the forbidden tree, "knowledge of good and evil." There is, however, a deeper and more awful sensibility produced by the dreadful possibility, that, perhaps, in the "child set in the midst of us," that spirit of evil may be lurking from

which the "man of sin" will spring, in ample portraiture and masterful energy. When the first birth took place in our world—when, amid the bitterness of that hour, the voice of maternal exultation exclaimed, "I have gotten a man the Jehovah!"\* little did the mother of our race imagine, that, instead of the promised seed, it was "Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother."† Benoni or Jabez would have been a more appropriate name than that which, in the fond imagination of her heart, she gave him.‡ But thus in their days of infancy calmly slumbered, sweetly smiled, and innocently lisped, the monsters of our race—Nero, Caligula, Alaric, and the Corsican, who were the world's dread and marvel, who lived to develop in fearful maturity, and indulge with insatiate appetite, the worst passions of our nature.

But there are higher and more momentous considerations which engage the attention of the devout and reflective mind. The child set in the midst of us is to live for ever. It may be insignificant as a material creature—fallen as a moral agent; but it is infinitely more valuable than "Arcturus with his sons," as a spiritual and immortal being. The world is but the cradle in which it is nurtured for immortality. It has emerged from non-existence into being; it has begun, emphatically, to feel, to suffer, and to experience; and gradually thought will flash, intellect expand, and reason operate, and the duties

\* Gen. iv. 1.

† 1 John iii. 12.

‡ Benoni, *the son of my sorrow*. Jabez, *sorrowful*. Cain, *an acquisition*.

of a rational and intelligent creature be performed. An existence has thus commenced which is never to terminate, which is to survive the lapse of ages, and to be prolonged when the history of the world shall close, and the hills are moved from their deep foundations. The things that are seen are temporal,—the objects of sight and sense tend to destruction and decay,—but the lamp of life is never to go out, it is to burn for ever, and never to be quenched in darkness. “Yesterday,” says an eloquent speaker, “that child was nothing; but when will it cease to be? Never! Immortality is written upon it, and the inscription is indelible, for it was traced by the finger of God. The mind has but begun its play; its instincts and its faculties but now move with incipient life. Even dull and worthless matter is of older date: ‘Of old thou didst lay the foundation of the earth.’ Ages of history passed before it was said of him, ‘A child is born into the world.’ History will continue its annals, matter its combinations, the heavens their course; but he shall survive them all. The revolutions of ages shall be forgotten, the high events of life chase each other from the stage, ‘the fashion of this world pass away,’—a period may arrive when it shall require an effort of even a perfected memory to recall the events accounted the most important on earth,—‘the heavens shall pass away with a great noise,’ and leave the spaces they have occupied to silence and to nothing; but ‘the child set in the midst of us’ shall then be. The basis of its existence cannot be shaken; but, in those

countless ages which its existence must fill, never let it be forgotten that it will be a happy spirit before the throne of God, or a hopeless outcast from his heaven."

It is a beautiful, soothing, and encouraging sentiment, that children attract the attention, and occupy the care of purified spirits in the heavenly world; a sentiment which stands on higher ground than the suggestion of our partial feelings; the direct, as well as the inferential testimony of Scripture. "For I say unto you," says the Saviour, "that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."\* Many of the ancient, and some of the modern interpreters, have deduced from this passage the notion, received by almost all nations, that every person has a spiritual guardian, who has always access to God, to receive orders relative to the management of his charge. If this is going farther than what is written, yet the language of the Saviour may be fairly considered as opening unto us the consoling thought, that "angels, beautiful and bright," minister for the younglings of earth's myriad flocks. A cold philosophy may advance its heartless objection, that intellectual natures so highly exalted above the most perfected minds on earth, can derive no improvement from creatures so far beneath them; but besides the exercise of their philanthropy, who can tell but that there are thoughts and feelings in the paradise of an infant's bosom which may commu-

\* Matt. xviii. 10.



nicate lessons of wisdom and instruction even to the loftiest intelligences?

“And they say that little infants reply by smiles and signs  
To the band of guardian-angels that round about them shines.”

The sentiment is instructive. It teaches us care and kindness to those whom both heaven's Lord and heaven's inhabitants condescend to notice; to pay them offices of love, as totally dependent upon our protection; and to bring them under a course of moral and spiritual training, as gifted with immortal natures, and consequent capacities for happiness and salvation.

If for the meanest of the children of our race the sympathies of these mighty minds who “excel in strength” are called into benevolent exercise, it is not surprising that this should be peculiarly the case when He who had listened to their praises “of old, even from everlasting,” became incarnate. It was calculated to excite the astonishment, and summon the attention of angelic natures; to rouse the intellectual faculty to vigorous investigation—when He thus descended from his high and glorious throne below the least of the principalities in his native heaven, and entered into our world of sorrow and of shame. “Unto us a child was born, unto us a Son was given”—“that holy thing”—“the Son of the Highest”—“a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes”—“set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” Upon the birth of this wondrous child, when, in the language of pious Quesnel, a son was given to a virgin, a saviour to the world, a pattern

to mankind, a sacrifice to sinners, a temple to the divinity, a new principle to the new world,—we marvel not that a multitude of the heavenly host should honour the occasion by their presence and their songs. And with deep, and grateful, and reverential feelings, will the pious and intelligent Christian, when children are sporting around him, call to mind the circumstance, that as they are so was the Saviour once; that the “child set in the midst of us” is an image of what he condescended to become; and that so intimately did he “know our frame,” as to be familiar with the various stages of our progress from helpless infancy to artless boyhood, from immature youth to ripened manliness.

The greater part of the Saviour’s life—upon a probable calculation, upwards of twenty-six years—is involved in profound obscurity. The period from his return with his parents from Egypt, to the commencement of his public ministry, is a complete blank, if we except the account of his attendance at the feast of the passover, when he emerges for a moment from his mysterious concealment, and commands the admiration of sages by his precocious intellect. Why a cloud should hang over so large a portion of his career, it is vain to inquire; it is the appointment of that God who “hideth himself.” Curiosity is ready, with its thousand questions, as to his occupations, habits, and pursuits; and a monkish legend has been composed to feed its appetite. It would be deeply interesting to trace the first thoughts and actions of the sinless child—the holy imaginings

of the spotless soul—the gradual formation of his mind—the developments of devotional spirit and character—to know when the humanity first became conversant with the mighty enterprise for which it was intended, and how often under the paternal roof, or amid the sublime scenery surrounding the capital of Galilee, thoughts of the future, its griefs and glories, visited the heart and occupied the meditations of the Saviour.

“ And did he spend the vacant hour  
Child-like, in ranging plain and wood?  
And did he seek the shadowy bower,  
And sportive twine the summer flower?”

In the peaceful valley of Nazareth—a valley of about two miles and a half in length, separated from the noisy world by an amphitheatre of verdant hills—we may conceive that he often wandered, in the silvery morn and in the golden eve, studying in its silent paths and deep ravines his Father's will, and maturing those plans of mercy and grace, intended to bless the whole human race. In this romantic region, now cursed by the barbarism of eastern despots, and degraded by monkish superstitions, he walked, and talked, and prayed, and thought, became familiar with our world's woes and ways, and prepared himself to announce and to accomplish his glorious mission,—to seek and to save its lost children of sin and shame.

“ Here was that vast beneficence design'd  
Which e'en embraced the universe, and bless'd;  
Which made a 'chosen people' of mankind,  
Of earth a Zion spread from east to west.

"Here was that fine morality matured  
Which all philosophy doth far exceed ;  
Which in the wreck of systems hath endured,  
And still endures, a never-ending creed.

"Here is the spot where Thou didst condescend  
Subject to earthly parents to remain ;  
Whereon thy infant wisdom did attend  
Thy virgin mother, wondering at the strain.

"Here were Thy sayings treasured in her heart,  
All worldly words and wisdom far above ;  
Tidings of peace on earth did they impart,  
Good-will towards men, and never ending-love."

From the straitened circumstances of our Lord's parents, and from the general custom of the country, it is probable that he was brought up to the trade of Joseph, and employed in his humble and laborious occupation. Every Jewish father was bound to do four things for his son. 1. To circumcise him. 2. To redeem him. 3. To teach him the law. 4. To teach him a trade. It was a recognised maxim in all families ; and in this instance the wisdom of the ancients is not an unmeaning phrase : "He who teaches not his son to do some work, is as if he taught him robbery." Some of the most distinguished names in the Jewish history, those who swayed the sceptre, were eminent in counsel, and took the command in battle, Gideon, Saul, David, and Elisha, were engaged, at an early age, in manual labours. It was not only advanced as an objection against our Lord, that he belonged to the family of an obscure artisan, but that he himself had been accustomed to "labour, working with his own hands." "Is not this the carpenter ?" \* was the

\* Mark vi. 3.

inquiry which the pride of his townsmen prompted. What condescension was this in the Son of God, who had all power at his command, all agencies at his disposal, and all happiness within his reach; whose ancient dwelling-place had been the bosom of the Father, and whose dominion ruled over all! The servant is taught, by this illustrious example, not to murmur if he has to toil for the "meat that perisheth;" and as the mind of Christ was doubtless occupied with holy contemplations and devout affections while thus employed, he may learn further, that it is his privilege and duty to blend pious meditations with secular cares, and to have his conversation in heaven while his dwelling is on earth.

Wanting the assistance of their children in early life at their several handicrafts, the Jewish parents bestowed upon them but a scanty and limited education. They had no schools among them similar to ours; indeed, the word school is originally Greek, and denotes a place of leisure, where persons resorted to amuse themselves rather than to engage in any serious pursuit. There were, it is true, the schools of the prophets, similar to those at Naioth, where Samuel taught, and at Bethel, where Elijah and Elisha gave instructions; but these institutions were principally intended for those advanced towards manhood, and seem to have answered to our universities. The education of children in general rested with their parents, and could only be prosecuted in the brief intervals snatched from pastoral and mechanical occupations. The law and the

prophets, the traditions of the elders, and the faith of the church in a coming deliverer, were principally taught in conversation rather than in regular lessons, agreeable to the institute of the Lawgiver : “Ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”\* Instruction of this kind was carefully imparted in all Jewish households, where piety had a tabernacle, and devotion an altar ; it was not, however, what was usually considered *learning* among them—the allegories, parables, and absurd expositions of the rabbins, taught in the rabbinical schools, were alone dignified with this title. When, therefore, we are told, with reference to the Saviour, that “the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?”† the question must not be understood as referring to his ability to read, but to his familiarity with the learning of the rabbinical schools, which was alone honoured by the name of letters. With the fictions glosses and traditions of the rabbins, he displayed a perfect acquaintance ; he happily exposed their absurdity in many of his discourses ; and the astonishment of the people was excited at his equalling any of their literati, without having frequented their public colleges. Of the mental acquirements of our Lord in his youth, we have but scanty information ; he never left the paternal roof for any of the great schools of his country, though one existed at

\* Deut. vi. 7.

† John vii. 15.

Jerusalem, in which four hundred doctors were employed; had he been trained up at their feet, it would have given the envious priesthood occasion to say that he had received his sublime doctrines and his fine morality from men and not from God.

Lower Galilee was the region in which the boyhood and youth of the Saviour were spent. Here Joseph and Mary resided before their heaven-enjoined marriage; here they received the angelic visitation which foretold the honours that were coming upon their house; and here, for nearly thirty years, they had the care and training, and were blessed with the society of Him appointed to redeem Israel. The country is not so wild and mountainous as Galilee of the Gentiles to the northward, where, as of old, Lebanon rears his tall summits to the skies, and waves his cedars to the passing winds. It is hence sometimes called the "great field," "the champaign," presenting, however, a delightful alternation of hill and vale, of rock and glen, of plain and pasture, of lake and sea. It was occupied by the tribes of Zebulun and Asher, and had for its principal towns Tiberias, Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Nazareth, Cana, Nain, Cæsarea, and Ptolemais. The Mediterranean Sea is on the west, the lake of Gennesareth on the east, Upper Galilee on the north, and Samaria on the south. Some of the most celebrated places in ancient scripture history are within its boundary; Carmel, Hermon, and Tabor, are among its mountains; "that ancient river, the river Kishon," and the "waters

of Megiddo," where the "stars fought against Sisera," are among its streams. Here, in this delightful district, where heaven's breath smells soft and wooingly,—where, under the culture of the Zebulunites, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and pomegranates, rewarded the labours of the husbandman; here did "the child grow in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man."\* The language of the country was doubtless that which he learnt and spoke, and wrote; it was a provincial dialect, differing in pronunciation and phraseology from that of Judea. Often, doubtless, was the eye of parental affection turned with delight upon this unparalleled specimen of humanity, exhibiting a mind unwarped by error, and unclouded by sin; often, perhaps, in company with Joseph, did he emerge from the quiet valley to visit the interesting localities where patriarchs lived, worshipped, and expired; where prophets prophesied, and the chosen contended with the heathen for the victory; every day gradually maturing in his mind that divine system of truth in which all men are to be blessed, and for which they are to call him blessed.

Of the personal appearance of the Saviour at this interesting period of his life, nothing whatever is said but that he "increased in stature," unless we suppose the fact of his growing "in favour with man" to intimate the possession of personal attractions. The word rendered stature may signify age as well; but as his increasing in this was a

\* Luke ii. 52.



circumstance so very obvious, it is probable that the sacred historian uses it in the sense given it by our translators. The imagination of poets and the fancy of painters have been exercised in depicting the features of the Saviour, in helpless infancy, in blooming youth, and the full stature of manhood; but, probably, all pictorial representations are widely different, and far inferior to the sublime original. Art would have been furnished with valuable data to mould its sculptures and to guide its pencil, had the letter of Publius Lentulus to the Roman senate been genuine. In the language of the prophet Isaiah, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;"\* personal deformity seems to be introduced merely as an image to point out the reception of his doctrine and pretensions by the great body of his countrymen. Very different is the testimony of the Psalmist—"Adorned with beauty above the sons of men;"† a description which Bishop Horsley thinks received an illustration of its fidelity, when, in the synagogue of Nazareth, "the eyes of all were *fastened* on him."‡ The beauty of the Jewish children in Jerusalem and Nazareth is celebrated by travellers. In the absence of authentic information, there is no improbability in the supposition, with reference to the Saviour, that his was the grace and the oveliness of external configuration; that a winning sweetness and inviting sanctity of expression were thrown over his external features; and that the

Isaiah liii. 2.

† Psalm xlv. 2.

‡ Luke iv. 20.

character of the material man corresponded, in some degree, with the moral beauty of the stainless spirit which it enshrined.

The instruction of the Saviour by his parents, in the great principles of morals and religion, doubtless commenced with the first dawn of reason. They taught him to pray, to read the Scriptures, to attend the public worship of the synagogue, and conducted themselves towards him as became wise, religious, and affectionate parents.

“Was not our Lord a little child,  
Taught by degrees to pray;  
By father dear and mother mild  
Instructed day by day?

“And loved he not of heaven to talk,  
With children in his sight;  
To meet them in his daily walk,  
And to his arms invite?”

The character of Joseph being that of a “just man,” living in the fear of God, and paying a practical attention to the requirements of the law—that of Mary, a modest, obedient, and prudent matron—would ensure the earliest attention and the most tender concern for the spiritual welfare of their child. And amply was all their care and assiduity repaid, in witnessing his lovely and benevolent tempers, like so many flowers of Paradise, gradually unfolding their fair and delicate colours, and filling their dwelling with fragrant odours. They had to weep over no blighted hopes, no disappointed expectations—over no youth of folly succeeding to a childhood of promise. Pure as the unsullied snow

which crests the mountain tops was the mind of Christ, "and the grace of God was upon him;"\* for, besides his earthly guardians, he had a Teacher whose form was invisible to human eyes, and whose instructions were inaudible to human ears—the "fulness of the Godhead"—the Spirit that was not given to him by measure.

It was the constant endeavour of the primitive Christians, in imitation of the Father of the faithful, to command their children and their households after them; to instruct them in the paths they trod, and lead them to love and reverence the God they served. A striking example of this we have in the case of the elder Basil and his wife Emmelia. They were descended from ancient and honourable ancestors; some of whom, during the Maximinian persecution, took refuge in the woody mountains of Pontus, where they remained in concealment and suffering upwards of seven years. Basil was a person of great note and authority; Emmelia was celebrated for her beauty and accomplishments; Macrina, her mother, who resided with them, had been a hearer of Gregory Thaumaturgus, in Neocæsarea, and a confessor in some of the later persecutions. There were ten children; and both father and mother endeavoured, by the force of precept and example, early commenced, judiciously conducted, and steadily persevered in, to bring them to be partakers with them of like precious faith. Nor were their efforts in vain, for the five whose names survive in story

\* Luke ii. 40.

were eminently pious, and three of them attained to episcopal honours. The eldest child was Macrina, named after her grandmother. Before she was twelve years of age, she had committed the whole psalter to memory, and was well versed in the other parts of the sacred volume. Disappointed in her heart's best affections—the individual to whom she was contracted dying before the marriage—she retired from the world, and spent the rest of her days in acts of piety and charity. Her life was written by her brother Gregory of Nyssa, who witnessed her last moments, and interred her remains with great solemnity. Among his works there is a dialogue between himself and his sister, on the soul and the resurrection, occasioned by the death of one of their brothers. The next child was Basil the Great, bishop of Cæsarea—a name too well known in the annals of the church to require any notice. Naukratius was the third. At the age of twenty-two he renounced the most flattering prospects as a rhetorician, and retired to a solitude near the river Iris, for meditation and prayer; where, after a sojourn of five years, he was killed by some unknown accident, along with his friend and constant companion Chrysaphius. The fourth child was Gregory, afterwards bishop of Nyssa, in Cappadocia; and the last member of this interesting family whose name has been preserved, was Peter, first presbyter of Cæsarea, and then bishop of Sebaste. There is a letter of Gregory's to him extant, concerning his book against Eunomius; followed by

Peter's answer, in which he praises his design, and strongly encourages him to proceed to the total extinction of that heresy, "lest the serpent, though his head is bruised, should still terrify the simple with the lashings of his tail." Well might Nazianzen observe, in his funeral oration upon Basil the Great, that though his parents were renowned for many noble virtues and qualities, yet that this was the greatest, the most glorious of all,—that they were so happy in their children. Emmelia, the mother, on her death-bed, had Macrina, the eldest, and Peter, the youngest, beside her; and, taking them by the hand, she thus commended them to Him in whose fear and knowledge they had been carefully trained: "To thee, O Lord, I thus devote and offer up both the first-fruits and the tenth of my children; this the first, the other the tenth and last of the fruit of my womb; both are thine by law—both due as gifts and offerings unto thee; let both, therefore, be entirely consecrated to thyself."

A mother has obviously a more powerful influence over her child than the father; and seldom has maternal solicitude, directed to the formation of religious character, failed of success. For years no fruit may have appeared—all may have been unpromising and disheartening; she may have thought that her labours had been in vain, and her strength been spent for nought: but the instructions of her privacy—the prayers of her solitude—have been imbedded in the memory of her child; and, in ripened manhood, their effect has been seen con-

ducting the steps of the wanderer into a right path. Cases, indeed, there have been, in which the evil influences of the heart have not only predominated for a season, but through life; but such are rare in comparison with those where pious, persevering effort has been rewarded. Chrysostom frequently refers, in his works, to his mother's counsels and prayers, as the means of bringing him to an acquaintance with divine truth, and qualifying him for that distinguished station which he occupied in the church. Her name was Authusa; she was left a widow at the age of twenty, with a son and daughter. Sedulously did she watch over the early years of John, anxious to promote his intellectual improvement, but far more so his moral and spiritual culture. Libanius was his master in rhetoric, Adragantius his master in philosophy, and she herself instructed him in divine and heavenly wisdom. But this good mother had well nigh deprived the church and the world of the fruit of her labours, by her injudicious fondness. Chrysostom thus relates the affecting scene, in the first book of his treatise on the Priesthood. Alluding to his contemplated entrance into the ministry, he observes:—

“When she understood that I was meditating such counsels, she took me by the hands, and led me to her private chamber. There, having seated me by her side, and the bed where I first beheld the light, she poured forth a flood of tears, and, addressing me in words more piteous than her tears, she thus gave utterance to her afflictions:—

“ ‘ But a little, O my child, was I permitted to enjoy your father’s virtues: such was the will of Heaven. His death succeeded to the pains which your birth occasioned, bequeathing orphanage as your portion, an unseasonable widowhood as mine. Together with the griefs of widowhood, which none can tell, save those who, like me, have borne them; I heard, undaunted, the roaring wave; I braved the storm; I did not feel the iron furnace, for I was especially aided from on high, and I enjoyed the sweetest consolation when I gazed upon your features, and recognised there the image of your father’s countenance, glowing with life, and wearing an inimitable semblance. Thus, when you were yet an infant, and your lips had not yet learned to speak,—at a season when parents chiefly derive pleasure from their children,—you afforded more than pleasure; you gave me consolation. And truly you never can complain, that while I bore my widowhood with patience, I expended your paternal substance to support me in it—a case which hath happened unto many, whose hard fate was orphancy; for I have not only preserved the whole inviolate, but I have neglected nothing which might further your improvement, and spread abroad your fame: from my own hereditary fortune defraying the expense.

“ ‘ Think not, O my child, that I recount these things by way of reprehension. I wish not to reproach, but, in return for all, to entreat one kindness; invest me not with the sad habiliments of a second

widowhood, nor rake up the decayed embers of an extinguished sorrow, but wait in patience my decease. Exhausted nature whispers that I shall not trespass upon you long. Reasonably may you hope that the young and healthy will arrive at an extended age; but I, who am grown old already, have nothing to expect but death. When you shall have consigned me to the tomb, and mingled my ashes with your father's dust, then undertake whatever journey, and explore whatever sea you will; for there will be no one to exclaim, I have the privilege of detaining you. But while I linger on the scene, endure to abide with me, lest you should rouse the displeasure of your God, by plunging in such bitter grief one who has not offended. If you can complain that I have involved you in the business of the world, and in the perplexity of my own affairs, respect not the laws of nature; remember not that you were reared by me, that you shared every thing with me; but abjure me as a deceiver, and fly me as an enemy. But if I have said every thing, and done every thing that you might peacefully enjoy your loved retirement, though nothing else have influence, let this constrain you to my will. You will tell me, that you have a thousand friends who love you; but which of them would toil, that you might live free from toil? O my son, which of them is wrapt up like me, in your life, your welfare, your reputation? "

Chrysostom, however, remembered the declaration of the Saviour: "He that loveth father or mother



more than me, is not worthy of me ;” though Authusa, under the impulse of excited maternal tenderness, for a moment forgot the remaining part of the sentence : “ He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.”

Among the mothers in the primitive church, distinguished for their devoted attention to the spiritual instruction of their children, was Nonna, who had the satisfaction of witnessing her solicitude crowned with the happiest effects. She resided at Arianzum, a village in the second Cappadocia, near Nazianzum, of which her husband Gregory was bishop. Spending her leisure time in the religious training of her household, she had the happiness of seeing her eldest son Gregory advanced, by his piety, to the bishopric of Sasima and Constantinople, and distinguished for his eloquence as the christian Isocrates. Her daughter Gorgonia became the wife of Alypins, and, after a useful life, sunk into the arms of death, faintly pronouncing these words of the Psalmist—“ I will lay me down in peace !” “ These things,” says Gregory, her brother, in his funeral oration for her, pronounced A. D. 370, “ were chanted by thee, and happened unto thee ; the psalmody which thou didst breathe was the event which did befall ; thine epitaph accompanied thy departure. Unruffled by the passions’ storm, calmly and serenely thou didst live, my sister ; and when it was appointed thee to die, the slumbers of the just were superadded to the sleep of nature. In both thy lot was suitable ; for living and dying, thy words were the words of piety.”

In the works of Gregory Nazianzen there is the following epitaph on his sister :—

“ Her wealth, her strength, her all, with ardent vows,  
At Jesu’s altar she had long devoted :  
What could she leave, when weeping, save her spouse,  
The friend beloved, on whom her spirit doated ?

“ But soon Alypius quits this mortal life,  
And goes where lov’d Gorgonia went before :  
Ah ! blessed husband of a blessed wife !  
From death redeemed, they live for evermore.”

Nonna’s youngest child was Cæsarius, who became a physician, and occupied a distinguished post in the courts of Julian and Valens. He died soon after the terrible Bithynian earthquake, Oct. 11, A. D. 368, in which province he was then residing, leaving behind him the following direction : “ My will is, that all that I have be given to the poor.” His funeral oration, preached by his brother in the church of Nazianzum, closes with the following sublime prayer : “ O Creator and Sovereign of all beings, but especially of man, thy peculiar workmanship ! O God of thine own people, their parent and their ruler ! O arbiter of life and death ! O guardian and benefactor of our souls ! Thou that createst and changest all things by thine energising word, in the depths of thy wisdom and administration, mayest thou receive Cæsarius, the first-fruits of one departed hence ! If it be thy pleasure to take the youngest first, we bend before that unerring wisdom, by which the great whole is governed. Mayest thou receive us hereafter in thine appointed hour, having ruled us in the flesh, as long as it

subverted our spiritual welfare; and oh! may we arise prepared to greet our Judge; not perturbed, nor recoiling with affright, from the closing day of nature, like those who are lovers of the world and lovers of the body, but joyfully ascending to the blessed and sempiternal life,—that life which is in Jesus Christ our Lord, unto whom is due the homage of exhaustless ages!”

The mother of Augustine deserves to be mentioned with special honour, on account of her unwearied endeavours and ceaseless prayers for his spiritual welfare. Monica had the affliction of beholding him in early life pursuing the paths of vice, and captivated with the heresy of the Manichees. In her distress she applied to an ecclesiastic for advice how to reclaim her son: “Go your way,” said he, “in peace; it is impossible that the son of these tears can perish.” She accompanied him to Carthage, to Rome, and Milan, in which place the object of her tender solicitude was brought under a religious influence, and her prayers were answered in his genuine conversion. The last interview of Monica and Augustine would be a fine subject for the pencil of a painter. At Ostia, where the Tiber joins the sea, she was attacked with fever; and leaning upon a window that looked into the garden belonging to the house where they lodged, their conversation turned upon the glories of the heavenly world. “We entertained ourselves,” says Augustine, “with these thoughts; and thou, O God, knowest, that in consequence of this conference, as

all that's charming and agreeable in the world, seemed contemptible in our eyes, she said : ' I assure you, my son, that with regard to myself, there is nothing in the world can give me any pleasure, nor do I know what I do or why I abide any longer in it, seeing I have nothing more to expect from it; for the only thing that made me a little desirous to live in it, was to see you a true Christian before my death. God has been pleased to do more, seeing he has not only granted me that favour, but also that of seeing you entirely his servant, by the contempt which you shew of all the pomps and advantages of this world. What should I do here, then, any longer ? ' " Fuller says, that Monica, drawing near her death, sent most pious thoughts as harbingers to heaven, and her soul saw a glimpse of happiness through the chinks of her sickness-broken body. This is the sentiment which Waller has versified in the well-known lines—

“ The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,  
 Lets in new light through chinks that time has made :  
 Stronger by weakness, wiser men become  
 As they draw near to their eternal home ;  
 Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,  
 That stand upon the threshold of the new.”

Augustine had every reason to be affectionately attached to his mother : with many tears he closed her eyes, and sorrowed over her grave. “ All day long,” he says, “ I was afflicted to the very soul, and my mind being full of trouble, I earnestly besought Thee to cure my grief. Falling asleep, I found when I awoke my grief much diminished ;

and, as I lay alone in bed, recollected those verses of thy servant Ambrose :

“ O God, the world's great Architect,  
Thou dost heaven's rolling orbs direct,  
Clothing the day with beauteous light,  
And with sweet slumber silent night :  
When wearied limbs new vigour gain  
From rest, new labours to sustain;  
When hearts oppressed find relief,  
And anxious minds forget their grief.\*

“ If any one should find I have done amiss in lamenting my mother a little, whom my eyes beheld as dead, she who had so many years wept for me, that I might live unto Thee, let him not reproach me ; but if he be very charitable, let him rather weep for my sins in thy presence, O my God, who art the Father of all the brethren of Jesus Christ.”

There is a beautiful and instructive letter extant of Jerome's, addressed to Laeta, the wife of Foxotius, the son of the illustrious Paula, concerning the education of her infant daughter. Among many rules which altered circumstances now render superfluous, there occur some important advices :—“ Let her be brought up,” says he, “ as Samuel was in the temple, and John the Baptist in the desert,—in utter

\* Augustine cites the Evening Hymn of Ambrose, which, for its simplicity, is very pleasing :—

“ Deus Creator omnium  
Polique rector, vestiens  
Diem decoro lumine,  
Noctem soporis grateâ;  
Artas salutas ut quies  
Reddat laboris usui,  
Mentesque fessas allevet  
Luctusque solvat anxios.”

ignorance of vanity and vice. Let her never hear, learn, or discourse of any thing but what may conduce to the fear of God. Let her never hear bad words ; but as soon as she can speak, let her learn some parts of the Psalms. Let her have an alphabet of little letters, made of box or ivory, the names of all which she must know, that she may play with them, and that learning may be made a diversion. When a little older, let her form each letter in wax with her finger, guided by another's hand ; then let her be invited, by prizes and presents suited to her age, to join syllables together, and to write the names of the patriarchs down from Adam. Let her have companions to learn with her, that she may be spurred on by emulation, and by hearing their praises. She is not to be scolded or brow-beaten if slower ; but to be encouraged, that she may rejoice to surpass, and be sorry to see herself outstript and behind others ; not envying their progress, but rejoicing at it, and admiring it, whilst she reproaches her own backwardness. Great care is to be taken that she conceive no aversion to studies, lest their bitterness remain in riper years. A master must be found for her, who is a man both of virtue and learning ; nor will a great scholar think it beneath him to teach her the first elements of letters, as Aristotle did Alexander the Great : that is not to be contemned, without which nothing great can be acquired. Care is necessary that she never learn what she will afterwards unlearn. The eloquence of the Gracchi derived its perfection from the

mother's elegance and purity of language. Alexander, the conqueror of the world, could never correct the faults in his gait and manners which he had learned in his childhood from his master Leonidas."

To the scriptural instruction of the young particular attention was paid by our fathers, the early non-conformists; and seasons of spiritual prosperity and revival in the history of religion, have been generally identified with it. In some cases, it has formed the most laborious part of ministerial duty. Of the Rev. John Ratcliffe, pastor of the presbyterian church, Jamaica Row, Rotherhithe, from 1705 to 1708, it is related, "He entirely devoted every Monday, from five in the morning to eight at night, for the several parts of the work. His catechumens were young persons of all parties, without any distinction of denominations, if they were but willing to receive the benefit of his assistance. Certain hours in the morning were taken up in hearing the younger children recite the answers of the Assembly's Catechism; those of some further standing being employed to hear them, and others to take care to preserve order, and an exact account of every one's proficiency and behaviour. Mr. Ratcliffe afterwards spent two hours in examining those that were more grown, upon the parts and sense of an answer, or, more frequently, upon a text of Scripture; which he closed with some practical inferences from the subject before them, a pathetic exhortation suited to the capacities and temptations of children, and an earnest prayer for

them. After dinner, the time was filled up till five with some profitable and free conversation; and the evening was spent in like endeavours, for the good of the other sex. The numbers thus instructed were no less than ten thousand, within the eight years he was employed in it. Sometimes there have been no less than two thousand present on a day." In more modern times, the institution of Sabbath schools, and of Infant schools, have superseded these laborious engagements, and have, in many instances, been signally useful. It augurs well for the future state and happiness of our country, that the attention of the community has been turned so much, of late years, to the training of the rising race: the nursery, instead of being a scene of thoughtless folly and vitiating error, is beginning to attract its share of serious solicitude and watchful care; and the important truth is more strongly impressing the mind of the religious public, and producing gratifying results—that the "child is father of the man;" and that the character of mature age is, in a great degree, determined by the mould into which infancy is put.

It should be the grand object of all parents to fulfil the high intentions of the great Father of all, in giving them offspring. The language of the princess of the house of Pharaoh to the mother of Moses may be adopted as the interpretation of the Divine will: "Take this child, and nurse it for me." And the first openings of the mind—the first dawn of intelligence—should be the commencing era of a



train of instruction, designed to lead the spirit in its first flight to take wing towards heaven. If there is one period in which conversion is more easy than another, it is when the young heart has not yet laid hold upon the world. The freshness and susceptibility of youth are favourable to the production of strong and lasting impressions. In very tender years, there can be no doubt but that children have all the capacity which is necessary to constitute a Christian; as soon as they are susceptible of love to an earthly parent, they are susceptible of the same affection to a heavenly Father. Facts numerous and well authenticated prove that at five or six years of age they have had the current of their love turned towards God; they have given indubitable evidence, that the light of his countenance has been lifted up upon them; they have endured pain with more than the fortitude of philosophers; they have met death,—an awful mystery to their apprehension;—with the calmness and joy of “hoary hairs in the way of righteousness.” A fearful responsibility invests the station which parents occupy: the care of an immortal mind is committed to them; they are putting in motion a train of causes, which will operate when they are in their graves—operate for good or for evil in time and in eternity. They feel acutely at the earthly death of their child, and weep over the mournful wreck which it presents—when the vital, animating principle ceases to throb, and the light of day fades from the eye, and the last breath of heaven escapes the lip, and all that is

lovely and attractive vanishes from the strengthless frame. And yet, alas! many of those who refuse to be comforted when "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not," are inflicting death in a far more fearful form by their carelessness or crime—death upon the soul. Let the example of Joseph and Mary be imitated by all christian parents; let them take care that the youthful mind is earlier acquainted with God, and Christ, and heaven, than with the world's ways and follies; then may they reasonably expect that their children will be "an heritage of the Lord," "as arrows in the hand of a mighty man," "as olive plants round about their table." And exquisite will be the joy poured into the pious, paternal heart, when sons or daughters are laid low, by the thought, that they were ripe for the heavenly world; and by the prospect of renewing there those mutual endearments which sweetened their existence on earth. Such was the hope with which an eminent prelate, Bishop Lowth, consoled himself, under the loss of one of the loveliest daughters that ever adorned humanity, and which he has recorded in an elegant Latin inscription upon her tomb:—

"Dearer than daughter—parallel'd by few  
In genius, goodness, modesty—adieu!  
Adieu, Maria! till that day more blest,  
When, if deserving, I with thee shall rest;  
Come, then thy sire will cry in joyful strain,  
O! come to my paternal arms again."

"This is the day which the Lord hath made."—*Psalm cxviii. 24.*

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"The Sabbath made thy genial heart her throne :  
Each day of mourning woke thy plaintive moan ;  
Each festival thy joy ; the conscious fane  
Beheld thy every pleasure, every pain.  
Thy trickling tears impressed the stones around,  
But on the cross alone in drops were found.  
The awful rites, no careless look disdained,  
And no unhallowed word thy lips profaned.  
No idle mirth perturbed thy placid cheek :  
The hidden virtues, God alone can speak.  
Thus flowed thy life at that congenial shrine :  
Wherefore he bade thee, in the fane resign  
Thy mortal part, and soar to realms divine!"

*Gregory Nazianzen's Epitaph on his mother Nonna.*

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE DAY OF REST.

ONE of the first lessons which a christian parent will endeavour to teach his child, is to reverence the Sabbath; to hold it in peculiar sanctity and honour, as a portion of time which God rightfully claims, out of respect to his own glory and the happiness of man. He will learn, as soon as the arithmetic of his early years enables him to calculate the completion of the hebdomad, that the next day is the Lord's; that it is his by an express and solemn claim, and that therefore it ought to be sacredly devoted to him as a kind of rent or acknowledgment, that all "our times are in his hand." The observance of a seventh day, as a season of rest, is an appointment of the Divine Being, in which he has consulted the temporal and spiritual welfare of his creatures. No ordinance indicates his benevolence and wisdom more than this. Such an interval of repose is essentially necessary, not only to the physical strength of man, but to that of all the animals employed in his service; and when viewed apart from its political aspect, it is found most

powerfully to subserve the interests of religion, by directing the attention, at regular and not very distant periods, to its important truths. The institution is an illustration of that analogy between natural and revealed religion, which has been so ably pointed out by a learned prelate;\* and it most beautifully corroborates the delightful doctrine, that a wise, considerate, and bountiful Intelligence presides over the affairs of our world, ministering to the natural necessities and moral wants of its inhabitants. It is equally as true of the inward as of the outward man, that "He knows our frame;" and in the appointment, upon the consideration of which we now enter, he has had respect to the life, the health, and vigour of both.

Laying aside the sacred volume, there are several *à priori* arguments which might be adduced to support the probability that the Divine Being would appoint a stated relaxation from the cares and business of life. If it is the duty of the creature to honour the Creator with solemn acts of worship; and if an exemption from the distraction usually attendant upon secular pursuits is a powerful, nay, an essential auxiliary to the proper discharge of this service; then there must be stated or irregular intervals when those engagements which would operate unfavourably as to devotional exercises, shall be suspended. The question, therefore, to be settled is, whether it would have been more worthy of Infinite wisdom and goodness, to have left the

\* Bishop Butler.

period, both as to its duration and the time which shall elapse between each recurrence, to individual determination, or, as has been done, to issue some authoritative regulation upon the subject? A little reflection, it is conceived, will invest the latter conclusion with a high degree of probability; for had the matter been wholly surrendered to individual legislation, it would be impossible for any one, however disposed, to calculate upon an interval free from interruption, unless all with whom he had commercial, friendly, or domestic connexion, adopted *his* arrangement. Besides, the stated *public* worship of God is usually admitted by Christians to be as much obligatory as private devotion; and how could solemn assemblies and holy convocations be with any regularity convened, except under the sanction of an authority generally recognised as competent to decide? And if we divest the Sabbath of its sacred character, and view it in its civil aspect as a day of repose and consequent refreshment for the whole animal creation, equally formidable difficulties meet the proposition of leaving the time of its recurrence to human arbitration; for how but by an all-embracing knowledge, which man does not possess, shall the precise frequency of the interval be ascertained, necessary to fulfil the purposes of the appointment? A sabbath in every three days, or a sabbath in every thirty, would be a positive injury to the community, though in different respects: the one would promote indolence, the other would not be a sufficient security against exhaustion. It must

not, then, occur too often; it must not occur too seldom: it must be so frequent as to supply the quantum of rest needful to preserve life and health; it must be so occasional as not to supply more than the absolute wants of nature demand: the stated rest, which all experience and philosophy tell us is essential to the well-being of man and beast, must then revolve at that precise period which shall harmonise with the average capabilities and wants of the community. If, then, a day of rest is necessary, the time of its recurrence must, in the nature of things, not be an arbitrary arrangement; it must be the result of nice and intricate calculations as to the capacity of the animal frame in general; it must be placed at the point where the measure of toil is not too limited, and yet not too lengthened, or else it may become a vicious or an inefficient institute. This consideration removes the question beyond the pale of human legislation. It gives a high degree of probability to the Scripture doctrine, that there is a positive law from Heaven upon the subject, as the data requisite to determine wisely, are alone in the hands of Him to whom all things are known.

1. *The history of the institution.* This has been much disputed among civilians and divines. Some have traced its origin to the highest possible date, and regarded it, in order of time, as prior to all other institutions which have a moral bearing upon human conduct. Others, with Paley, have maintained the first actual institution of the Sabbath to have occurred in the wilderness, when the double supply



of bread on the sixth day was promised to Moses. According to this last opinion, the account given in Genesis of God's blessing the seventh day and sanctifying it, must be understood as a proleptical arrangement, appointing that day to be observed not at that period, but by the Israelites in subsequent ages.

There is a passage in the prophecy of Ezekiel, which is quoted by Paley, and upon which great stress is laid by those who maintain the Sabbath to have been first enjoined in the wilderness: "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which, if a man do, he shall live in them. Moreover, also, I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them." Here, then, it is affirmed, Ezekiel in the most explicit manner asserts, that the period when the Israelites departed out of Egypt and came into the wilderness, was the time when the Almighty gave unto them his sabbaths; *ergo*, the Sabbath had not been given them till then. It is to be observed, however, that the *statutes* and *judgments* of the Lord are spoken of in the same connexion as his *sabbaths*; and the statement of the prophet, whatever meaning is assigned to it, has the same meaning with reference to the one as the other. Now it is utterly inconceivable that *no statutes, no judgments* had been given to the people before their migration into the desert. Yet this *must* be the sense of the passage, if an in-

terpretation of it is admitted declarative of sabbaths being then first appointed. But we know for certain that statutes had been given ages before the period referred to; and moreover, that several of the enactments of the wilderness were *old* laws amplified and renewed. The rite of circumcision, the distinction of clean and unclean beasts, and the appointment of animal sacrifice, are instances in point. When, then, Ezekiel speaks of statutes and judgments being given to the Israelites at their egress from the house of bondage, he does not mean to assert that no communications of law had previously been made to them from heaven, for this would be contrary to the facts of the case; and so, when he declares that the sabbaths were given to them at the same period, he cannot fairly be understood as insinuating that they had hitherto had no such appointments. Certain ordinances were then renewed, as well as fresh regulations made. It seems most probable, that a state of slavery, always inimical to morals, had operated unfavourably upon the character of the people—had induced a neglect of the duties of the patriarchal religion—had led particularly to the non-observance of the sabbatic institute, the law of which was solemnly renewed and re-enacted in the wilderness. This interpretation is not invalidated by the fact, that the prophet speaks of “sabbaths” being given as “a sign” between God and the Israelites: it is by no means essential to the character of a sign that it should be something which had no previous existence. The rainbow was made the sign of a covenant

with Noah after the deluge; and sound philosophy tells us, that, as the same natural causes existed antecedent as well as subsequent to the appointment,—as the rain descended and the sun shone on the antediluvian earth,—the beautiful phenomenon graced the firmament of the ancient world.

But the silence of the patriarchal history, as to the observance of a sabbath, is supposed to argue strongly in favour of the non-existence of the ordinance in those days. Because no mention is made of it in the long interval between the creation and Moses, it is inferred that the law did not come into force until the era when he flourished. Admitting the total, the absolute silence of the Scriptures upon the point, we might justly refuse to admit the conclusion. Circumcision was ordained as a sign of the covenant which God made with Abraham and his posterity; it was the characteristic mark of the elected family of the patriarch—that which distinguished them from the surrounding heathen, to whom to be uncircumcised was evidence that they were without the pale of the chosen: and yet we read of no instance of the performance of this rite, during the interval from the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan to the circumcision of Christ. But who asserts that, upon this ground, the heaven-appointed sign—the national boast of the Jew—was then relinquished? The silence of Jewish history in this case would mislead us if we regarded it as proof of the discontinuance of this Jewish practice; and the silence of the patriarchal record, even admitted to

its fullest extent, when advanced as evidence of the non-existence of a patriarchal sabbath, is open to the same objection.

The unprejudiced and attentive student of the Genesis of the sacred volume will not, however, concede the point, that, with reference to the Sabbath, the earlier portions of holy writ give forth no oracle. Glimpses of such an institution are afforded us under the patriarchal dispensation, both anterior and subsequent to the deluge, and whilst the flood of waters was upon the earth. It is certain that the ante and post-diluvians computed their time by weeks of seven days; and as this is not a *natural* division, as there is no ground in nature for it, the inference is in the highest degree probable that it proceeded from a positive Divine appointment known and observed from the creation. The following passages afford demonstrative evidence of the existence of the hebdomad in the time of Noah: "Come thou and all thy house into the ark—for yet *seven days* and I will cause it to rain, &c.; and it came to pass after *seven days*, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." "Noah sent forth a dove—And he staid yet other *seven days*, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark." "And he staid yet other *seven days*, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more." The patriarch sent forth the dove from the ark three times; the two last flights of the bird, it is distinctly stated, took place on two seventh days—a circumstance which not only proves the existence of the week,

but renders a religious observance of the respective days highly probable; Noah apparently expecting a particular blessing to attend an action so expressive of his faith and hope, occurring on the sacred period. We have evidence equally as conclusive of the existence of the week in the time of Abraham. When circumcision was appointed as a sign of the covenant of God with him, the following words were used:—"He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you;" which means, that the man child shall be circumcised a week after the day of his birth. The correctness of this inference is attested by the terms of the Levitical institute:—"If a woman have borne a man child, then she shall be unclean seven days, and in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised; but if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks." In the interview between the servant of Abraham and the relatives of Isaac's wife, we read—"Rebekah's mother and brother said, Let the damsel abide with us a week or ten days, after that she shall go." The same division of time is mentioned in the following instances:—in Rebekah's advice to Jacob, "Arise, flee thou to Laban, my brother, to Haran, and tarry with him a week, until thy brother's fury turn away." In Jacob's servitude for Rachel, he "served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him as a single se'nnight, for the love he had to her;" that is, the week of years appeared unto him as a week of days. In his servitude a second time for her, after being imposed upon with Leah, Laban said unto him,

“Fulfil her week.” In the mourning that was made for him at his death, “Joseph made a mourning for his father seven days.” In the institution of the passover—“Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever : seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread.” These instances were all previous to the enactment of the Jewish Sabbath ; they sufficiently prove an observance of the septenary revolution of days by the patriarchs, and consequently some peculiar distinction of the seventh day.

It is remarkable that heathen nations, many of whom had no connexion with the Jews, and no knowledge of their law, divided their time by periods of seven days. The most ancient poets of the Greeks invest the seventh day with a peculiar sanctity and honour. Hesiod styles it, λαμπρὸν φάος ἡελίοιο, the splendid light of the sun ; and Homer mentions it as, ἱερὸν ἡμαρ, the sacred day. What, it may be asked, originated the distinction of this particular period ? The reason why time has been computed by days, months, and years, is readily given ; day and night are pointed out to the common sense of mankind by the diurnal course of the sun ; lunar months and solar years are equally obvious to all rational creatures ; but how the division of time by weeks of seven days came to obtain, universally, and from the beginning, can only be accounted for upon the supposition that a seventh day rest was appointed at the creation, observed by the professors of the patriarchal religion, and preserved in remembrance, faint and indistinct indeed, among their posterity.

Let any one, with a candid and unprejudiced mind, read over the first Jewish enactment respecting the Sabbath, and he will not, it is conceived, see in it an institution till then completely unknown. "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man : and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord *hath said*, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord. Six days ye shall gather it ; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." Again : "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws ? See, for that the Lord *hath given* you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you, on the sixth day, the bread of two days." The Sabbath, it is contended, is not here spoken of as a novel institution ; it had already been appointed—the Lord had already given it ; and to further the purposes of a well known but probably much neglected observance, the supply of manna was doubled on the sixth day. Had it been altogether new, had the people and their leader been up to that period strangers to the appointment, it doubtless would have been propounded in terms expressive of its novelty, and some more ample directions would have been given with reference to its observance ; but nothing of this kind occurs : the inference therefore is, that it had been long ago established, that the people were already apprised of their general duty at such a season ; and hence only one direction is thought necessary, and that is

called forth by a decidedly novel phenomenon, the "angels' food," suspended on the Sabbath, but bestowed in increased abundance the day preceding. Be it also remembered, that the same moral and political reasons for the ordinance existed anterior, as well as at the period of, or subsequent to, its enactment in the Jewish law ; and our conclusion is strengthened, that in the long interval between the creation and that time, comprising one millennium and a half, which witnessed the budding, decline, and departure of many generations, an institution so salutary to the physical structure and religious improvement of man, was known and sanctified by the pious among "the world's grey fathers," as one of the primal appointments of the all-wise and perfect Mind.

Under the legislation of Moses there was an impressive republication of the sabbatic law. The probability has already been intimated that the moral and religious character of the Israelites had deteriorated during their bondage in Egypt. The prophet Ezekiel expressly charges them in that country with the guilt of idolatry ;\* and such awful delinquency as this with reference to the God of their fathers, would be connected with total neglect of the institutions he had appointed. Indeed, if we suppose any of the oppressed community inclined religiously to observe the Sabbath, there is reason to conclude that their tyrannical masters rendered it impracticable for them to do it with any regularity.

\* Ezekiel xx.



A solemn re-enactment of the primitive law was then highly necessary ; and after the Divine will had been declared in the regulated falling of the manna, the institute was formally re-appointed amid the mysterious splendour of Sinai. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," was written with the finger of God upon the tables of stone.

But Judaism, with its ritual peculiarities, its robed priests and sounding trumpets, its brazen altars and mysterious pomp of sacrifice, has passed away ; and the opinion has been hazarded by many writers that the law of the Sabbath ceased to be binding when the dispensation of Moses was abrogated. It is argued that the Sabbath is not now a part of the divine law, because the Jewish code has been repealed, and in the New Testament there is no express formal re-enactment of the statute. But the repeal of the Jewish law did not extend to the abolition of what was law before it ; it did not annul an institute in existence anterior to the promulgation of the Mosaic code ; the ancient original law given at the creation, and observed as part and parcel of the divine will by the patriarchs, remained in full force when the rites and formalities of Judaism were abrogated. The establishment of the christian dispensation has not removed any thing but what was purely Jewish ; it has not, therefore, abolished a sabbatic observance, for there is nothing that is Jewish in the ordinance itself : "before Abraham was" it was in being, sanctioned by "the word of the Lord," which is to endure for ever. The words

of Christ are remarkable : " The Sabbath was made for man ;" not for man as a Jew, but as a rational, immortal, and accountable creature, bound by the obligation of gratitude, as well as law, to worship and honour his Creator. No reason can be assigned why this merciful provision should exist for four thousand years, and then all at once be abolished as unnecessary. The physical nature of man and beast has not been strengthened so as now to be capable of unremitting toil ; the rest is equally as needful to the Gentile as it was to Abraham's sons ; and to suppose that its obligation terminated with Jewish rites and ceremonies, and that it has no higher sanction than human prudence or policy, is in effect saying that God had " bowels of compassion " to the ancient world, which he has not to the modern ; that at a certain precise period he ceased to care for his creatures in the manner he had done, and left it entirely to the option of man to provide that relief which humanity still needs, which he once granted, but from which he has now taken his authoritative commands.

Christianity, while it superseded the ceremonial ritual, not only left the moral law untouched, but gave additional confirmation to every rule of inward and outward holiness. It is an ingenious conjecture of the excellent German Professor Tholuck, that when our Lord delivered his sermon upon the mount, there were persons present who supposed and expected that his design was to overthrow the whole ancient constitution. The lessons of history, and

the tendencies of human nature, render this exceedingly probable. In a passage, therefore, of high doctrinal importance, he declared that he "came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil." His coming had not a negative, but a positive end; he came not to make of none effect, but to complete. He declared this with reference to the Old Testament economy, which the two elementary parts he specified in the Jewish *usus loquendi* indicate; it is important, therefore, to inquire in what sense the fulfilling spoken of is to be understood. The term "law" undoubtedly embraces both branches, the moral and the ceremonial. The ceremonial law he could only fulfil by realizing its types and supplanting its shadows with the substance; and likewise the moral, by maintaining its authority, giving a deeper insight into its requirements, and teaching a higher and more perfect performance of them. In like manner he fulfilled the prophets; not only their predictions of himself, but the lessons of moral truth which they inculcated: the former were accomplished, the latter were sanctioned, enforced, and amplified. Beautiful is the remark of Tholuck, "the legal dispensation has perished in that of grace, as the flower dies in the fruit." The law then, in its ethical branch, is permanent; in its ritual it was temporary;—the latter was superseded by the realities of the gospel; the former is to abide in every jot and tittle. There is a passage in the epistle to the Romans which, as it bears upon the point, may here be quoted: "Do we then make

void the law through faith?" The apostle is teaching that no man can be justified by the law; and he meets the scruple which has at all times forced itself upon the mind of man in contemplating this extraordinary scheme of salvation, viz. whether such a doctrine does not lead to immorality? His inquiry is, therefore, equivalent to asking whether Christianity removes the obligation of the law, because it opposes the notion of justification by it. To this he replies in the most solemn manner, "God forbid; yea, we establish the law." The sense in which the apostle uses the term law, we are not left to conjecture: it is pointed out in another passage, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." There is an allusion here to the tenth command of the decalogue, which shows the decalogue to be the law referred to; the establishment, and not the subversion of which, is contemplated by the genius of the gospel dispensation.

It is evident, then, that the ethical branch of the law was not relaxed when the ritual ceased; its precepts are as much binding upon the Christian as they were upon the Jew: so that the divine obligation of the Sabbath is established not only on the ground of its original institution, but by the place which was given to it in the decalogue. For, that the observance of the institute is a part of the moral law, is obvious from the prominence given to the command, in that epitome of religious duty engraven on tables of stone. It recognises the moral

principles of homage to God and mercy to men, and leads to the moral improvement of the creature, while it inculcates the worship of the Creator; and hence it was properly collocated in the Sinaitic code with the grand and leading duties of morality and religion. Whoever, therefore, denies the divine authority of this sacred institution as a permanent law universally binding, must abjure the authority of the whole decalogue, and embrace the dogmas of Antinomianism in all their grossness and deformity. It has been objected by anti-sabbatarians, and the objection is advanced by the present Archbishop of Dublin, that if there is any force in our argument, we are bound to render obedience to the command with the same circumstantial exactitude, and to observe it on the same day, as the Jew. But this by no means follows; for, while we maintain the command to be founded upon moral principles, and to propose moral ends, we also hold, that, as a positive precept, there may be circumstances connected with it which may be altered without trenching upon the principle, or losing sight of the end. Of such circumstances, however, we are not to be the judge, and such alterations we have no authority to originate; nor, in the instance referred to, in observing the first, instead of the seventh day of the Jews, do we conceive that the church acted upon its own discretion: the change was made under the sanction of inspired men, who were, doubtless, guided by the "wisdom from above" in the procedure; and the change was of such a nature as more fully subserved

the moral and religious purpose of the institute, by extending its commemorative design from creation to redemption and immortality!

It may be proper to observe further, as to the absence of an express command respecting the Sabbath, and particularly the change of day, that it would be adopting a very perilous hypothesis, if we supposed that the will of God is only obligatory when it comes to us in a mandatory form. The Divine Being has not invariably given the same form of enunciation to the revelations of his pleasure. Besides the formality of legal promulgation, he has employed examples, proverbs, songs, incidental allusions and occurrences, to point out the path of duty to mankind. The mode of manifestation does not affect the character of the announcement, or render obedience less imperative. Ascertain the fact that there is an expression of the Divine will upon a certain topic so as to exclude all reasonable doubt, and the mannerism of the communication becomes a matter of indifference; there is the same awful sanction displayed, and the same deep responsibility involved, whether the topic assumes the character of authoritative command or not. Thus, then, we gather from the christian Scriptures the will of God and the duty of man upon this particular point; we find there a Sabbath observed under apostolic authority—observed, too, on the first day instead of the seventh,—and we interpret the **EXAMPLE OF INSPIRED MEN** as declarative of the **LAW** to us.

The first day of the week was the period when our

Lord rose from the dead, as the morning light began to dawn. On that day we read of a private assembly of the disciples, "at evening, being the first day of the week ; and when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them." This, says Paley, might, as to the day, have been purely accidental ; but when a little farther on, in the same chapter, we are told that "after eight days (that is, on the first day of the following week), again the disciples were within, the doors being shut," we naturally infer the second meeting to have been the result of appointment and design. As the Saviour, after his resurrection, did not take up his abode with his disciples, but visited them after intervals of absence, breaking in upon their company and disappearing from their midst as a spiritual being, in a manner to them mysterious and inexplicable, it would only be the part of prudence and common sense for them to have appointed a time and place of regular assembly, in order to prepare, by mature counsel, for the circumstances of peril with which they were surrounded. And probably this second meeting was appointed under the direction of their Master, who visited them upon the occasion.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we find Paul dedicating the same period to a religious service ;\* and the time is manifestly mentioned as the usual one—"upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread," either to celebrate

\* Acts xx. 7.

the eucharist, or to partake of the agapæ which preceded it, "Paul preached unto them." That this was also the practice of the churches in Galatia and at Corinth, we have the following evidence. It was the regular custom of the Jews to make their collections for the poor on the Sabbath-day, and for this purpose they had attached to the synagogue a purse, which was called "the purse of the alms."\* The apostle directs the Christians in the above-mentioned places to make a similar collection upon the first day of the week; from which we are warranted to infer, that it was the period they consecrated specially to religious duties. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye, upon the first day of the week." If such, then, was the practice in two of the principal seats of Christianity, at the time when the epistles were written, we have satisfactory evidence of its apostolicity, and, consequently, of its Divine sanction and prevalence in all other places where the gospel was preached.

The prophet Ezekiel has been supposed to predict this change of the day, when giving a description of the mystical temple, which may be considered as a figure of the christian church. He states,† "Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it, and they shall consecrate themselves. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings,

\* Arneki shel tsedakah.

† Ezek. xliii. 26, 27.



and I will accept you, saith the Lord God." This language, remarks Dr. Dick, is symbolical; the allusions are to the ceremonial services of the temple. Something is manifestly predicted which was never literally fulfilled; but as the whole refers to a new state of things, the mention of the eighth day, as the day of solemn sacrifices, may well be considered as an intimation that the eighth day, in order from the beginning of the Jewish week, or the christian Sabbath, was henceforth to be holy to the Lord.\* But an argument from prophecy is not necessary in this case: no fact is better attested than the religious observance of the first day of the week by the primitive Christians—there is not a tittle of evidence that the procedure occasioned any controversy—the new arrangement was unanimously adopted by the first churches, who had ample means of ascertaining the will of their Lord: proof sufficient to satisfy any candid mind that the change was made under the highest authority—that of the Founder of our religion.

In the epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, one of the most ancient uninspired documents of the christian church, which was commonly read in its religious assemblies, there is no specification of the seventh, or the first, day of the week by name. He refers, however, to appointed periods for worship, in the following terms:—"Seeing, then, that these things are manifest unto us, we ought to take heed, that, looking into the depths of Divine know-

\* Dick, Lect. Theol. iv. p. 247.

ledge, we do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord hath commanded us to do. That we perform our offerings" (gifts for the support of the ministry and the poor) "and service to God, on their *appointed seasons*; for these he hath commanded to be done, not rashly and disorderly, but at *certain determinate times and hours*. He hath himself ordained by his supreme will, both where and by what persons they are to be performed, that all things being piously done unto all well pleasing, they may be acceptable unto his will."\* Ignatius, in his epistle to the Magnesians, mentions the Lord's-day being kept instead of the ancient Sabbath:—"If, therefore, they who were brought up in these ancient laws, have come to the newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths, but keeping the Lord's-day, in which also our life is sprung up by him."†—Justin Martyn observes: "We all of us assemble together on Sunday, because it is the first day in which God changed darkness and matter, and made the world. On the same day, also, Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. For he was crucified the day before that of Saturn; and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, he appeared to his apostles and disciples, and taught them what we now submit to your consideration."‡ Tertullian speaks of observing "Sunday as a day of festivity; not from any worship which we pay to the Sun, but from a very different reason."§

\* Clem. Epist. c. 40.

† Just. Mar. Apol. c. 89.

† Ignat. ad Magnes. c. 9.

§ Tert. Apol. c. 16.

Clement, of Alexandria, likewise mentions the Lord's-day,\* observing it, "according to the commands of the gospel, by casting out all evil thoughts, entertaining profitable ones, glorifying the resurrection of the Lord thereby." Dionysius of Corinth, in a letter to the church of Rome, says, "To-day, we celebrated the holy Lord's-day, when we read your epistle to us, and the first epistle of Clemens."† Origen mentions three festivals—Lord's-day, Easter, and Pentecost.‡ Athanasius remarks, "Of old the Sabbath was in great esteem among the ancients; but the Lord hath changed the Sabbath into the Lord's-day. Not we by our authority have slighted the old Sabbath—when Christ, the great Master, came, it became useless—the candle is put out when the sun shines."§ Ambrose of Milan speaks of the Lord's-day being "venerable and solemn, because thereon our Saviour, as the rising sun, having dispelled the darkness of death, shone forth by the light of his resurrection. The Sabbath-day was the last in order of days, but the first in sanctification under the law; but when the end of the law was come, to wit, Jesus Christ, and by his resurrection had consecrated the eighth day, that which is the eighth began to be the first, being dignified by the precedency of the number, and sanctified by the resurrection of the Lord." Chrysostom assigns the following reason for Paul's appointing the first day for the collection, 1 Cor. "Because this day they

\* Clem. Strom. 7. p. 744.

† Orig. cont. Cels. 8. p. 758.

‡ Euseb. Hist. Eccles 4, c. 23.

§ Athan. de Semente.

did abstain from all works, and the soul was more cheerful by the rest of the day, besides the good things received this day; for on this day death was destroyed, the gates of hell broke to pieces; therefore if we so honour our birth-days, how much ought we to honour this day, which may well be called the birth-day of all mankind." Theophilus of Alexandria testifies that "both custom and reason challenge from us that we should honour the Lord's-day, and keep it festival, seeing on that day it was our Lord Jesus Christ completed his resurrection from the dead."\* Thus, from a very early period, certainly within a few years of the lifetime of the last of the apostles, the religious observance of the Lord's-day has prevailed, a practice which must have had the very highest authority; an authority not inferior to that of the direct suggestion of the Lord of the church.

But though the early Christians thus observed, with religious honours, the first day of the week, the Lord's-day, they still retained the seventh in high veneration, and honoured it with public devotional solemnities. Hence it is designated by the word *Sabbatum* in the writings of the fathers. It was

\* Edict. Theoph. apud Balsam. in Synod. tom. ii. pp. 1, 170.

For the manner in which the early fathers spoke and thought of the Lord's-day, or the christian Sabbath, the following places may be consulted in their writings:—

Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho; Tertullian, *adversus Judæos*, cap. iv.; Ephrem Syrus, *ad Gen.* ii. 1, 2; Greg. Nazianz. on the Pentecost; Id. *Orat.* 43; Epiphanius *Hæres.* 51, *ad Luc.* vi. 1; Cyrill. Alexand. in cap. vi. *Amos*; Greg. Nyssen. *Orat. in Resurrect. Christi*; Jerome, in *Ezek.* c. xx. in *Isaiah* lx. 15, in *Ezek.* xlv. 25; *de Celebratione Paschæ*, *Sermo de Resurrectione Domini*.

not an easy task to detach the Jewish converts from the Mosaic institutions ; and in the eastern world, where they prevailed, it was deemed prudential policy to humour their prejudices by keeping their Sabbath as a religious festival, instead of denuding it of its ancient honours. This practice was, however, by no means primitive, nor was it universal. It was far more common in the third century than at the close of the first. Ignatius, in his epistle to the Magnesians, condemns those who sabbatize ; and Tertullian likewise rejects sabbaths and new moons as foreign to christians, and speaks of the Lord's-day and Pentecost as Christian solemnities.

The respect shown to the Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, in the Apostolical Constitutions, is advanced by Lardner to disprove the antiquity claimed by some for that production, and to support the probability of its being the work of the fourth or fifth century, instead of the early times of Christianity. They ordained, that by all Christians in general the Sabbath and the Lord's-day should be kept as festivals ; that every Sabbath in the year, except one, and every Lord's-day, be kept with joy, without making them days of mourning or fasting ; that servants should cease from labour, and come to church on the Sabbath and the Lord's-day ; that Christians in general should assemble together for worship on every day, but especially on the seventh and first. Socrates, in the fifth century, says, that christian churches in general throughout the world met, and had the eucharist every week on the

Sabbath, excepting the churches of Rome and Alexandria. Sozomen, also, about the same time, says likewise, that at Constantinople, and almost every where except Rome and Alexandria, Christians assembled on the sabbath as well as on the first day of the week. But the fathers carefully explained their views in sanctioning this practice; "not," says Athanasius, "as if we were infected with Judaism; but we meet upon the Sabbath that we may worship the Lord of the Sabbath; not out of any religious respect to that false Sabbath, but merely in devotion to Christ." \* Hence the council of Laodicea, while it decreed that the gospels and other scriptures should be read on Saturdays,† had a canon to this purpose, that Christians should not Judaize and rest from all labour on the Sabbath, but follow their ordinary works, as far as comported with attending public worship: it was also ordained that they should prefer the Lord's-day before it—on that day rest as Christians; and that if any were found to Judaize, they should be accursed.‡ Chrysostom thus closes one of his sermons: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you, that if any of us present, or those that are absent, shall go to look upon the trumpets, or meet in the synagogue, or join in their fasts, or partake of their sabbaths, or perform any other Jewish custom great or small: I am clear from the blood of you all. These words shall stand up, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, between

\* Athan. Homil. de Sement. in init.

† Canon 16.

‡ Athan. Homil. de Sement. tom. i. p. 885.

me and you; and if you obey they shall give you great boldness, but if you disobey, or conceal any of them that presume to commit such things, they shall rise up as vehement witnesses against you."

## II. THE DESIGN OF THE INSTITUTION.

The purposes contemplated in its appointment are both political and religious in their nature. "Man," says the Psalmist, "goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." Yet, besides the mere sleep of night, the animal frame requires other seasons of relaxation in order to its health and vigour. To furnish these to the hard-toiling labourer, who has to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and to the beasts of burden employed in his service, the weekly rest has, therefore, been ordered by an all-wise and ever-watchful Providence.

But moral and religious ends were more immediately contemplated by the great Lawgiver in this benevolent statute.

The Sabbath has a commemorative design, being originally instituted as a memorial of the creation. Indeed, the only reason assigned for it in the primary enactment, is God's resting on that day from all the works that he had made. When the creative plan formed in the Divine mind had been executed—when the fabric of material nature had been erected in its stateliness and beauty—when specimens of all the species of animated existences that were to people it had been called into being—the Architect "blessed" and "sanctified" the day that passed in light and shade over a perfect world,

appointing it to be held as a sacred festival in honour of the power and goodness of the operating agent. We are not to understand by God's resting, the existence of toil and weariness; for the "Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." Nor are we to understand, his ceasing to operate any farther, for his agency is still employed without remission, in preserving, ordering, and governing the world; but the suspension of the creative energy and skill is meant in bringing any more distinct species of creatures into being. Accordingly, when all that he thought proper to create in this part of his boundless dominion was created, he "blessed" the day that dawned upon the finished work—in other words, he *spoke well* of it, for the Hebrew phrase is rendered by a Greek compound in the Septuagint signifying this; and he sanctified it, or set it apart to a holy purpose, which the primal pair and their posterity were to observe as a day commemorating the great event. To keep then the human mind in remembrance of this important truth of natural and revealed religion, that "all things come of Thee," was one of the reasons why the Sabbath was originally appointed. Crude and imperfect conceptions of the creative power, have ever been connected in a greater or less degree with absurd worship and vicious practice. History is full of striking instances of this. As mankind lost hold of the great fact recorded in the opening verse of the inspired Scriptures; as the Creator, with his attributes of power and wisdom and goodness,



faded from their recognition ; superstition began to mislead, deceive, and blind, and idolatry brought them to the shrine of its graven images—worshipping and serving the creature, they came under the dominance of “vile affections.” Foreseeing then the evil, it was worthy of the moral Governor of the world to provide against it ; and this he did, not only by distinctly revealing himself as the Creator in his word, but instituting a memorial of the process and termination of his works. The Sabbath was doubtless observed with this view by the pious patriarchs ; and it operated, we may conceive, not only in preserving their theology from corruption, but beneficially upon their characters—promoting their personal religion, inspiring adoration, thankfulness, and praise, by keeping up in their recollection, the “day when the Lord made the earth and the heavens.”

Under the Jewish economy, the Sabbath, reenacted with pomp and ceremony in the wilderness, was marked with peculiar distinctions as a commemorative sign of the Exodus of the people from Egypt. “Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and a stretched out arm ; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.” Some writers, as Mr. Mede, have endeavoured to prove, that the seventh day in the Jewish week was the day on which God overthrew the host of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and thus completed the deliverance

of his people. However this may be, they were expressly commanded to observe the Sabbath, not only in memory of the Divine rest after the creation, but in commemoration of their own rest from the servitude under which they groaned in the house of bondage. This was one feature of that peculiarity of character which the institution sustained among the Jews, and of which it was divested when Judaism came to an end. It was appointed as a sign of a certain national deliverance, intended to excite gratitude and praise, by calling up a recollection of the deeds of ancient days: the appointment was obviously limited to the people who experienced the blessing, and was not intended to survive the dissolution of their state and polity. The christian Sabbath is also a commemorative institute — celebrating our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Before this event, the creation of the heavens and the earth was the most marvellous work of God with which man was acquainted; but the work of redemption, of which the resurrection is the confirmative seal, sustains a loftier character, because a display of moral perfection rather than of natural power. The day of this grand occurrence was consecrated by the apostolic churches as a Sabbath in memorial of it, and hence it was entitled *Κυριακή*, or *Dies Dominica*, the Lord's-day, as it is called by the Apostle John. Its prevailing name now is Sunday, an epithet, which, however improper, can boast of a remote antiquity. The day of the triumphant return of Christ from the dead, the first day of the

week, was identical with that which by the heathens was dedicated to the Sun. Many of the Fathers, especially Justin Martyr and Tertullian, addressing the heathen governors, use the appellation best known to them ; and when the world became Christian it was retained in the imperial edicts of the first emperors as the common usage, and so has passed down to us.

But the Sabbath is to be regarded as a typical institute—a type of the heavenly rest—that blessed state of being into which believers enter, when the cares and toils and trials of earthly existence are finished. In this light it is viewed by the Apostle Paul, who makes it the ground-work of his discourse in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews : “There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God.” The Greek word *σαββατισμός*, Sabbath, is here substituted for the one which has the same meaning given to it in the context, *κατάπαυσις*, *rest*, because the writer regarded the present septennial rest of the saints, as emblematic and illustrative of their future eternal portion. The typical character of the earthly Sabbath was held by the ancient Jews, and among the moderns the same opinion has passed current. But that disposition to be wiser than what is written, to add their own fanciful conjectures to the word of God, so characteristic of all their theologians, led some of the Jewish doctors to assign a septennial rest to the damned, as well as an ever-during one to the happy. It is very common with the rabbinical writers to speak of a Sabbath above and a Sabbath

below, *Shabbath illaah veshabbath tethaah* ; and it was received as a law of interpretation, that where the plural number is used, as in Lev. xix. 30, "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths," that the lower and higher Sabbaths are intended, and that the one is emblematic of the other. This opinion was early grafted into the christian church ; and it has been a pleasing and profitable employment to the believer in his closet, to study the picture of heaven, which is set before him every recurring week of his pilgrimage, and to anticipate the hallowed rest which he shall enjoy with the whole congregation of the redeemed. Origen, in his sixth book against Celsus, regards the Christian resting after his six days' toil, as a type of that repose we shall enjoy, when we have done our work, so as to have left nothing undone which was our incumbent duty.

Such is the design of the institution : a memorial of certain grand epochs in the history of our race, marked with special displays of Divine benevolence : intended to remind us of our obligations to the Giver of all good gifts, and to lead us to the grateful adoration of Him on their account. And thus we see, that whatever changes the Sabbatic law has undergone, whatever modifications the first appointment has subsequently received, the same commemorative design has been kept in view : the primitive institute harmonizes with its Jewish republication, and that with the christian edition, and this with the thing typified, in celebrating a rest ; the rest of God from the exercise of creative power—

the rest of his people from political oppression—the rest of Christ from his redeeming work—and the rest of the believer in the heavenly world.

### III. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE INSTITUTE.

The first great duty connected with its observance is the suspension of all needless worldly pursuits. The ceremonial law enjoined upon the Jews a rigorous abstinence from all manner of *work or business*. They were not to buy and sell, carry burthens, “find their own pleasure,” or “speak their own words,” a command which prohibited conversation about worldly matters, and the indulgence on the seventh day in those recreations and amusements which might be innocent and laudable on the other six. Fires were not to be kindled in their habitations. The use of fires was probably allowed in cold weather to warm themselves, but they were prohibited when the object was merely to dress their victuals: this was to be done on the day previous to the Sabbath, that servants might be as little engaged as possible. Journeys were also forbidden, except to places of worship: the distance to which they might lawfully travel, according to the Rabbins, was two thousand cubits, or about two-thirds of an English mile.

The design of these regulations was obviously to secure the great end of the Sabbatic institution—rest from worldly employment, in order that the individual might have opportunity to celebrate the worship of Jehovah, and ability to perform it in a proper manner, neither the mind nor the body being

exhausted by fatigue. Many of the later Jews so rigorously interpreted the law, as even to abstain from works of necessity and mercy, and violated the spirit of the command in exclusively attending to the letter. At the time of the Maccabean wars, it was deemed unlawful on the Sabbath, to defend themselves when attacked by an enemy. When Antiochus Epiphanus invaded Judea, B.C. 168, a thousand Jews took refuge in a cave in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, where they were besieged by Philip the Phrygian. Conceiving that they should violate the law of God by working in their own defence, they all fell unresisting victims to the fury of their foes. Upon this account it was decreed by Mattathias the priest, after solemn debate, that in such a case it was perfectly lawful for the people, upon any future occasion, to fight for their lives when attacked, though it was still deemed a sin to be the assailants on the sacred day. Pompey, therefore, at a subsequent period, when besieging Jerusalem in favour of Hyrcanus, observing the besieged to act upon this principle, abstained from any direct assault on the Sabbath; but employed the day in placing his battering engines, and filling up the ditches with which the temple was fortified, by which means he succeeded in his enterprise, and brought the people under the Roman yoke. The command in Exodus, "Abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day;" which interdicted all needless excursions, literally interpreted led some to fancy that in whatever

position they found themselves on the Sabbath morning when they awoke, they were to continue in the same during the day, or if they got up and happened to fall, they were to refuse to rise until the day was ended.\* Thus has the law of God been trifled with, (by the way, the common vice of the Jewish church,) its spirit was nullified, and its character degraded by traditionary precepts, and thus one of the most benevolent arrangements of the Divine Being was converted into a yoke of bondage, a heavy burden, too grievous to be borne.

Our Lord, on many occasions, practically rebuked the Jews of his day on the great question of proper Sabbatical observance; he told them, by many significant actions, that they had mistaken the character of the institute; that they made it an oppression instead of a relief; and that, however attentive to the letter of the law, they were at the greatest pos-

\* A story is told of Rabbi Salomon, who fell into a slough on the Jewish Sabbath, and refused to be pulled out, giving his reason in the following Leonine couplet:—

“Sabbatha sancta colo, De stercore surgere nolo.”

“Out of this slough I will not rise,  
For holy Sabbath day I prize.”

The Christians determined that he should honour their Sabbath as well, and so kept him in the slough all the next day.

“Sabbatha nostra quidem, Salomon, celebrabis ibidem.”

“In the same slough, thou stubborn Jew,  
Our Sabbath-day thou shalt spend too.”

Fabyan, in his *Chronicles*, relates the following case:—“In this yere also (1259) fell that hadde of the Jewe of Tewksbury, which fell into a gouge on the Saturday, and wolde not for reverence of his Sabbot day be pluckyd out; whereof heryng, the Erle of Gloucetyr, that the Jew dyd so great reverence to his Sabbot daye, thought he wolde doo as much unto his holyday, which was Sondag, and so kepte hym there tyll Monday, at whiche season he was foundyn dede.”

sible distance from its spirit. When he healed the impotent man by the pool of Bethesda of his "thirty and eight years' infirmity," he commanded him to take up his bed and walk, though the bystanders said, "It is the Sabbath-day, it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." It would not have been lawful if it had been the removal of an article of furniture from one dwelling to another, which might be done as well on another day; but it was a work of necessity and piety; and Christ, by commanding it, taught the surprised spectators that such works the enactment was never designed to touch. The Sabbath was appointed to honour God in, and the restored man would be doing this much more effectually by going to his habitation to discharge his private or public religious duties, than by staying at the pool to watch his property: his carrying his bed was an act of faith in the Saviour's word, and a public proclamation of the mercy he had experienced; so that the man's employment, though in itself purely servile, was subserving in a most important sense the interests of religion. Take another instance: "Jesus went on the Sabbath-day through the corn, and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat"<sup>f</sup>—or, according to our expressive Anglo-Saxon, "The Healer went on rest-day over acres; truly his learning knights hungred, and they began to pluck the ear, and eaten." The Jews remonstrated, on the ground that this was a breach of the Sabbath; but the Saviour vindicated the procedure of his followers. They were in a state of



extreme poverty and want, and the natural law of necessity justified their conduct in the emergency. A remarkable expression came from the lips of our Lord upon this occasion—"Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath-days, the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless?"

On the holy day the sacrifices were slain and offered up, and the usual offices of the temple performed by the priests, as on other days; this necessarily occasioned servile employment, by which, according to the letter of the law, the day was profaned; but the priests were blameless of any real profanation, because the law never contemplated the prohibition of those works which necessity and piety required. The same truth the Saviour frequently taught by the splendid miracles which he performed. He restored the withered hand to the animation of healthy existence, on the Sabbath—he cured the daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, on the Sabbath—and when asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" he replied, "It is lawful to do well."

The Redeemer has in this respect left us an example, that we should follow his steps. The law of the Decalogue being still the law to us, on the seventh day we are "to do no manner of work"—works of necessity and mercy, according to the practical exposition of the great Pattern, being excepted. By the former are meant, works which could not have been done on the preceding day, and cannot be deferred till the next. "We must kindle fires in our

houses ; we must travel to and from the house of God ; we must look after some parts of our property, as our flocks and herds ; we must guard it when it is exposed to danger ; we must use means to extinguish a conflagration, and carry away goods which would be destroyed by it, or by a sudden inundation. These duties arise from circumstances over which we have no control. They will not wait until we find time to attend to them, but must either be done now, or not done at all ; and as the Sabbath was made for man, they were permitted, although literally they break in upon its rest. Works of mercy are those which are performed from compassion to our fellow-creatures. The care of cattle may be placed under this head, as well as under the former. No man is required, under pretext of resting from his works on the Sabbath, to leave them to suffer from hunger and thirst. On the same principle we may carry food and raiment to the poor, when their demands are urgent, and we had not a previous opportunity of attending to them. We may visit the sick, administer cordials and medicines to them, dress their wounds, and perform other offices by which they will be soothed and relieved. It is on this ground that we deem it lawful for physicians to practise upon the Sabbath. It is a gracious institution, designed for the good of man in this world, as well as for his salvation in the next ; and it does not interfere with any service immediately called for, which will contribute to either."

To insure the suspension of all needless worldly

labour on the sacred day, and to further its religious observance, the civil power has frequently interfered; and the statute book has exhibited a formidable array of pains and penalties against those who have trenched upon its sanctity.\* Legislation has in this instance travelled out of its proper province: to enforce the religious observance of the Sabbath is not its office; to enforce its civil observance as a day of rest, highly conducive to the general weal of the community, is alone within its pale. That seasons of repose are necessary to the preservation of the public health; that without them the animal creation would degenerate in vigour; that one generation accustomed to unremitting drudgery would entail an inheritance of disease, and deteriorated physical power, upon its successor; are facts about which enlightened physiologists are pretty well agreed. The evidence given

\* Constantine, when he embraced Christianity, commanded a suspension of labour on the Sabbath throughout the empire. Under Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius, an edict was issued, prohibiting shows, arbitration, judges sitting in open court, and the transaction of pecuniary business. Under Theodosius the younger, the edict of Gratian was revived, at the request of the council of Carthage: the circus and theatres were ordered to be closed. The edict of the Emperor Leo is thus expressed: "It is our will and pleasure that the holy day dedicated to the most high God, should not be spent in sensual recreations, or otherwise profaned by suits of law; the Lord's-day we decree to be a venerable day, and therefore free it of all citations, executions, pleading, and the like avocations. Let not the theatre be opened, nor any combating with wild beasts be seen upon it. And if either birth-day or inauguration-day happen to fall on it, we require it to be put off to the day following." The objection of the Roman agriculturist is thus met: "As to the pretence that by this rest, an opportunity may be lost—this is a poor reason, considering that the fruits of the earth do not so much depend on the diligence and pains of men, as on the efficacy of the sun, and the blessing of God. We command therefore all, whether husbandmen or others, to forbear work."

below of Dr. Farre\* before a parliamentary committee, is to this effect. As, then, the Legislature is the guardian of the common-weal, it is its duty to appoint certain intervals of relaxation from toil, or if custom has determined these intervals, to enforce their observance; or else it does not answer the end for which all government is established. In this view, the civil magistrate is bound to protect the dependent and labouring class in the enjoyment of their leisure time; he has a right to see that the trader who rests on the Sabbath shall sustain no injury in his business by so doing, by the cupidity of another which leads him to work; he is bound by

\* "I have been in the habit," he remarks, "during a great many years, of considering the uses of the Sabbath and of observing its abuses. The abuses are chiefly manifested in labour and dissipation. The use, medically speaking, is that of a day of rest. I view it as a day of compensation for the inadequate restorative power of the body under continued labour and excitement. A physician always has respect to the preservation of the restorative power, because if once this be lost, his healing office is at an end. If I show you from the physiological view of the question, that there are provisions in the laws of nature which correspond with the Divine commandment, you will see from the analogy, that 'the Sabbath was made for man' as a necessary appointment. A physician is anxious to preserve the balance of circulation, as necessary to the restorative power of the body. The ordinary exertions of man run down the circulation every day of his life; and the first general law of nature by which God (who is not only the giver, but the preserver and sustainer of life) prevents man from destroying himself, is the alternating of day with night, that repose may succeed action. But although the night apparently equalizes the circulation well, yet it does not sufficiently restore its balance for the attainment of a long life. Hence, one day in seven, by the bounty of Providence, is thrown in as a day of compensation, to perfect by its repose the animal system. I consider, therefore, that in the bountiful provision of Providence for the preservation of human life, the sabbatical appointment is to be numbered amongst the natural duties, if the preservation of life be admitted to be a duty, and the premature destruction of it a suicidal act. This is said simply as a physician, and without reference at all to the theological question."

his office to prevent, as far as possible, posterity receiving from an over-worked population the curse of a sickly and enfeebled existence. But the civil power has no right to dictate how an individual shall employ his leisure time, while he injures not the rights of others; that must be left to private judgment.

Much, I am persuaded, might be done by the government to secure the community in the enjoyment of this blessed institute, if, leaving christian principles out of the question, they brought to the task sound political economy, and had the courage to scorn as they deserve the "fool-born jests" that human wit and wickedness may sport.\*

The second duty connected with a right observance of the Sabbath is the dedication of it to religious exercises.

The law of the Decalogue enjoins us to "keep it holy;" to sanctify it; to separate it from a common use, and consecrate it to a sacred purpose. Though resting from worldly toil, we are not to be indolent; that attention which is abstracted from our ordinary pursuits is to be directed specially to the duties of religion. In the private exercises of family worship;

\* Why could not markets on Saturday be removed to Friday? In the large manufacturing towns the market is the busiest about 12 at night, so that it is not till late on the Sunday morning, that the tradesman can retire to rest. And how much unfitted is he to enjoy his Sabbath on this account! In Lincoln, Derby, and one or two other towns, the market is on Friday, and the same arrangement might be made throughout the kingdom without the slightest inconvenience, but with great practical benefit to the community.

in public homage to our common Lord; in self-examination, reading, meditation, and prayer; we are to spend the holy interval. The law of the ancient church enjoined "a holy convocation" on "the seventh day;" and the usages of the Jews, as recorded in the evangelists, make it clear, that they employed the Sabbath for such a purpose. In accordance with the practice of his countrymen was the conduct of the Saviour—"he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day"—"he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath," a congregation being within its walls. The details of ecclesiastical history are abundantly conclusive, that it was the custom of the primitive church to meet for prayer and praise on the day of their Master's resurrection. But the Sabbath is not spent aright if it is only outwardly hallowed; if it is only a day of external forms and ceremonies: we are to be in the "spirit on the Lord's day," like the exile of Patmos; in the spirit of prayer, of ardent devotion, of earnest expectation, panting after God, as "pant the deer the cooling spring to find."

For the due observance of the Sabbath, the Jews were commanded assiduously to prepare on the preceding day: they were to remember it over night: and, accordingly, at three o'clock on the afternoon of the sixth day, the trumpets blew and the preparation began. Among the primitive Christians a pernoctation or vigil was used on the preceding eve, answering to a modern prayer-meeting. Hence the custom still prevails in various

parts of the rural districts in our land, of servile labour, ceasing at an early hour on the Saturday. "It was," says one, "a holy custom among our forefathers, when, at the ringing to prayer, the eve before the Sabbath, the husbandman would give over his work in the field, and the tradesman his work in the shop, and go to evening prayers in the church, to prepare their souls, that their minds might more cheerfully attend God's worship on the Sabbath-day."

Among the serious part of the Scottish peasantry, the "Saturday e'en" is a season of preparation, and is spent in the manner which Burns has so exquisitely described—in reading the "big Ha' Bible," and chanting "holy lays."

" They chant their artless notes in simple guise;  
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;  
 Perhaps Dundee's wild warbling measures rise,  
 Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name,  
 Or noble Elgin\* beats the heavenward flame,  
 The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays.  
 Compared with these Italian trills are tame;  
 The tickled ears no heartfelt rapture raise;  
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

" The priest-like father reads the sacred page,  
 How Abraham was the friend of God on high;  
 Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny;  
 Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;  
 Or Job's pathetic plaint and wailing cry;  
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire;  
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

\* Dundee, Elgin, and Martyrs, are the names of Scottish psalm-tunes.

“ Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,  
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;  
How He who bore in heaven the second name,  
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head :  
How his first followers and servants sped ;  
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land :  
How he who lone in Patmos banished,  
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,  
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by Heaven's  
command.

“ Then kneeling down to heaven's eternal King,  
The saint, the father, and the husband prays :  
Hope ‘ springs exulting on triumphant wing,’  
That thus they all shall meet in future days :  
There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,  
Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
In such society, yet still more dear,  
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.”

The Lord of the Sabbath watches the observance of his day jealously, threatens its profanation sharply, complains of it bitterly, and punishes it severely.

“ If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words : then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”\*

“ If ye diligently hearken unto me to bring in

\* Isa. lviii. 13, 14.



no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath-day, but hallow the Sabbath-day, to do no work therein ; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots, and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem : and this city shall remain for ever.”\*

“ If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day ; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.”†

\* Jer. xvii. 24, 25.

† Ver. 27.

“ Among all these I\* sought a resting-place,  
But in whose inheritance shall I dwell?  
Thou directed me, the Creator of all,  
And my Maker fixed my tabernacle—  
And said :

‘ In Jacob pitch thy tabernacle,  
And in Israel receive thy portion.’  
Before the former age he created me,  
And unto the age I shall not fail.  
In the holy tabernacle before him I served,  
And thus was I established in Sion ;  
In the beloved city also he fixed me,  
And in Jerusalem was my power ;  
And I took root in a glorious people,  
In the Lord’s portion of his inheritance.

“ He maketh WISDOM run over as Pison,  
And as Tigris in the time of new fruits ;  
He filleth up understanding as Euphrates,  
And as Jordan in the time of harvest ;  
He cleareth up instruction as light,  
As Gihon in the time of vintage ;  
Not perfectly did the first man know her,  
Neither so shall the last trace her out ;  
For her thoughts are more deep than the sea,  
And her counsels than the great abyss.  
And I, as a canal from a river,  
And as a water-course entered Paradise.  
I said ;  
I will water my garden,  
And will saturate my plat ;  
When, lo !  
My canal became a river,  
And my river became a sea.”—*Ecclesiasticus*, xxiv.

\* *Wisdom.*

## CHAPTER III.

### THE WORD OF GOD.

IN every age of the world's changing history, the Divine Being has held some intercourse with his creatures, and favoured them with some intimations of his will. Sometimes these intimations have been invested with circumstances of peculiar impressiveness and solemnity : the veil has been lifted up from the Eternal Mind with splendid and stately ceremonial ; and with a trembling lip and faltering tongue, man has been constrained to testify that the secret of the Lord has been with him. But in our day, divine revelation is given unto us with the greatest simplicity ; the word of the Lord is no longer audible enunciation—it is a written document ; the grand and imposing media of former communications have retired ; no finger writes the purposes of God in flame, or angel-voice publishes to some awe-struck prophet his commands : in a book penned under the influence of immediate inspiration, we have the declaration of the Divine will, the disclosure of the Divine purposes, and the law of human duty. This production is an object

at once the most extraordinary and interesting; it stands apart in its moral glory more lofty and commanding than any other subject of human contemplation; it embodies all the elements of the beautiful and the sublime; it has the marvellous and the instructive impressed upon it; a loftiness which might command the reverence of an angel, and a simplicity which commends itself to the apprehension of a child.

The contents of that book, which we denominate the Bible,\* though derived from the same omniscient and eternal Spirit, have been communicated through the medium of different individuals. The monarch and the plebeian, the historian and the legislator, the orator and the poet, have each been employed to fill up the sum of its announcements; and though living in ages the most distant from each other, under different forms of civil government, under different dispensations of the Divine economy, their respective contributions beautifully harmonize in their spirit and in their tendency. There was a period when the canon of Scripture presented a very different aspect from that which it bears in our day—when it was imperfect and incomplete: the stream of truth had not always that broad and expanded surface which it has now; it was small

\* The word Bible comes from the Greek *Βιβλίον*, and is used to denote any book, but *par excellence* the book of inspired scripture. *Βιβλίον* comes from *Βίβλος*, the Egyptian reed from which the ancient paper was procured. Chrysostom uses the term in the particular sense now assigned to it.—“I therefore expect all of you to procure to yourselves *Βιβλία*. If you have nothing else, take care to have the New Testament, particularly the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospels, for your instructors.”

at its rise, and scanty in its flow ; and though receiving accessions from age to age, yet it was not until the world had passed by far the greater portion of its present history that it attained its fulness. For nearly eighteen hundred years, however, the revelation has been completed. "Blessed," then, "are our eyes, for they see ; and our ears, for they hear." It is not the first dawn, but the meridian radiance of heavenly light, that has visited us : we have not only the law given by Moses, but grace and truth which have come by Jesus Christ ; not only the dark and shadowy intimations of the prophets, but those more copious and exact exhibitions of Divine truth, given in the public teaching of our Lord, and in the written epistles of his apostles.

The Scriptures claiming to be a revelation made by God to man of himself and of his will, in addition to what he has made known by the light of nature or reason, it is an obviously incumbent duty to examine their pretensions in this respect, that the believer may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him.

Admit the existence of a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, and the possibility of his making a discovery of himself and his will, in the manner we believe he has done in the sacred volume, must be admitted also. The possibility of an immediate divine revelation being granted, its probability will appear from many presumptive arguments. As we sustain the character of moral agents, and are therefore under a law or rule of conduct—as

no law can be binding unless it is made known—as men in all ages have been unable to attain any adequate information upon moral and religious truth of themselves—and as supposing any minds of superior order to have discovered the great principles of religion and duty by inductive processes; such discoveries would have no authority to render them binding upon the rest of mankind;—it appears that there is a high degree of abstract probability investing the opinion, that the Divine Being has in his goodness made an express revelation of his will. But a strong presumptive argument in its favour may be drawn from the necessity of the case. The unassisted energies of the human intellect have been insufficient to rescue men from the most deplorable ignorance upon moral and religious subjects: though endowed with mental capabilities of the highest order, they have remained the victims of doubt and superstition. The ancient world, with the solitary exception of Judæa,—a small and insignificant territory,—was “without God and without hope;” efforts were indeed made by aspiring and philosophic spirits to arrive at the knowledge of truth, and some faint and partial glimpses dawned upon the horizon of the human mind. Socrates taught, and Plato lectured, and Homer sung; but the world, with all its “wisdom,” “knew not God.” Never, since the corruption of the primitive religion, has there been found, where the Scriptures are unknown, a religious system unfolding just views of the character of the Divine Being,

enjoining a correct morality, or presenting any effectual barrier to the deterioration of public manners. If, then, the Creator is concerned for the welfare and happiness of his creatures,—and this is an induction of reason;—if it is reasonable to conclude that he will provide for their temporal wants, and yet not overlook their infinitely more important moral and spiritual necessities; then is our way open to the inference—that a revelation of the Divine will is a just and reasonable expectation.

A supernatural manifestation of truth being both probable and necessary, it is evident, that fully to meet the wants of man it should contain clear discoveries upon those important subjects on which he has most generally and fatally erred—that it should have a satisfactory external authentication, and that it should possess provisions for its effectual promulgation among all classes of mankind. The Christian revelation has all these circumstances in its favour. It exhibits the nature, the perfections, and the claims of God—his will as the rule of moral good and evil—man's immortality and accountability—the means of obtaining pardon and of conquering vice—the chief good, respecting which the theories of the ancient sages were almost endless, and at the antipodes of each other;—it exhibits all this in a manner so distinct and vivid, that he who runs may read the benevolent and important lesson. As to its external authentication, it is of such a nature as to exclude all reasonable doubt of its divine authority: the evidence which can

be brought forward, tried, by the ordinary principles of human reason, is demonstrative in its favour; and has accordingly won the assent of the wisest and best of men, men who have dignified humanity by their talents, and adorned it by their virtues. The Scriptures could not have been the inventions of men, for the good will not deceive, and the bad would not have produced books so condemnatory of their principles and conduct. From the splendid series of miracles and prophecies which the Bible unfolds—its sublime doctrines and elevated morality—its miraculous preservation from the attempts of fraud and violence to destroy it—the harmony which subsists between its various parts—together with its tendency to ameliorate the condition of the human race, so manifest from the effects which flow from its cordial belief;—from these facts taken together, a body of evidence is collected which ought to satisfy, and will satisfy every candid inquirer, that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

The Old Testament, with a few exceptions, is written in that language which we call Hebrew. It derives its name from the Hebrews, the forefathers of the Israelitish nation, among whom it was in use. With equal propriety it might have been called the Jewish language, because employed by the subjects of the Jewish monarchy; and also the Canaanitish, because the language of the Canaanites was, in its origin and genius, the same with that of the Hebrews. After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews



styled it the "holy language." Its origin is generally referred by all the learned to an age long prior to the origin of the Israelitish race: nay, in the opinion of some it was the language of mankind before the deluge, and consequently the only dialect in the new world. In process of time it acquired various degrees of diversity among contiguous nations, similar to those we observe in one and the same language now; but probably among the Hebrews it approached nearest to its primitive nature and genius. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the antiquity of the Hebrew letters now in use: it is, however, generally supposed that they were anciently more rudely shaped than they are now, though having the same configuration; and, that after the Babylonish captivity, they received that character of elegance for which they are now distinguished. A few parts of the Old Testament are composed in that dialect generally denominated the Chaldaic, and which has a close affinity to the Hebrew: this was the language in use through the country stretching from the Orontes to the Tigris, to which the general name of *Aramæa* is frequently applied. Those portions from Daniel ii. 4 to the end of chap. vii., and from Ezra iv. 7 to chap. vi. 18, and likewise chap. vii. 12—16, are written in Chaldaic. In the prophecy of Jeremiah, chap. x. 11. there is a Chaldaic verse, but it is justly suspected of not being genuine, as it interrupts and confuses the sense. In Genesis xxxi. 47 there are two *Aramæan* words; in the Books of Moses and Job there are some of an *Egyp-*

tian origin ; and in the later books some Persic words occur.

The language of the New Testament is Greek, but not pure Greek ; it is a Greek imitating the Hebrew, and that not only in single words, phrases, and figures of speech, but in the general texture of its style. Luke, who is generally considered more pure in his style than any of the rest, has innumerable Hebraisms ; and the commencement of his Gospel, after a short preface in pure Greek, becomes, in verses 5, 6, and 7, so completely Hebraistic, that it might be rendered word for word into good Hebrew. The adoption of this style naturally arose from the circumstances in which the apostles and the evangelists were placed, and the purpose to which their writings were to be applied. Knowing, in general, no literature besides the Hebrew Scriptures, a pure Greek idiom could only have been acquired by miracle. But it was very far from being desirable for a miracle for such a purpose to have been wrought, for had the apostles written scholastically, no one would have believed them to have been the authors of their own writings ; and they themselves never having learned the language scholastically, would have required an additional inspiration to have understood their own productions. Besides, the members of the primitive churches being principally Jews, if not by country yet by descent, to them the epistles and gospels would have been unintelligible had they been written in classical Greek. An interpreter of the New Testament, however

skilled as a Theban, would then be led into grievous errors, if ignorant of Hebrew: thus the formula ἀδελφὴ γυνή,\* if explained according to the Greek idiom, as it is used by Plutarch in Alexandro, c. 30, ἀδελφὴν καὶ γυναῖκα, *the wife and sister of Darius*, would give an utterly false sense: interpreted according to the Hebrew, it simply means *a Christian wife*. Every deviation from pure Greek is not, however, necessarily a Hebraism: we find some Latinisms, owing to the intercourse which subsisted between the Romans and the Jews, with Syriasms and Rabbinisms.

No original copies of the sacred books are now in existence. The autographs of the apostolic writings perished at an early period, through constant wear, and the violence of persecutors. Indeed, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, seem never to have existed in Paul's own handwriting: he employed an amanuensis, as almost every man of weighty occupation does; and attested the authenticity of the documents by penning the salutation and signature with his own hand.

In the library of the Dominicans at Bologna, in Italy, a copy of the Pentateuch, said to be the autograph of Ezra, was some time ago preserved. To this illustrious Jew, the unanimous voice of antiquity assigns the publication of the canon of the Old Testament scriptures, which had previously

\* 1 Cor. ix. 5.

existed only in separate parcels, and had been injured by the ignorance and carelessness of transcribers. Though the pretensions of the Bologna manuscript cannot be sustained, yet a very considerable antiquity is attributed to it by the most eminent bibliographers. The following account is given of it by Montfaucon, in his *Diarium Italicum* :—

“ I had long been desirous,” he observes, “ to turn over the manuscript which I was told had been many years preserved among the relics of St. Dominic, which, at my request, was courteously granted by the Dominican fathers. But in regard that the said jewel is locked up under two keys, one of which is kept by the magistrates, and the other by the friars, they took care to have them both brought, and produced a vast volume or roll. It is a calf-skin, dressed and pliable, containing not the book of Ezra, as many give out, but the Pentateuch, in the nature of the books still preserved in the synagogues of the Jews. I took notice of some few marginal notes by a more modern hand. The letters have scarcely lost any thing of their blackness, which is attributed to the skin, as a preserver of ink. The manuscript was presented to the monastery by the Jews, when Aymericus was general of the order, that is, about the beginning of the fourteenth century. An inscription, sewed in about the middle of the roll, declares it to this effect :—

“ ‘ This is the roll of the law, written by Ezra the scribe, with his own hand, when the children of the

captivity, under Cyrus, returned to Jerusalem, and built the second temple, which was finished in forty-two years, and stood four hundred and twenty, that is, till forty-two years after the passion of Christ. That this is the very same, has been received by the constant report of ancient Jews, who were examined in several synagogues, where it was also preserved. From ancient times it was looked upon as such among the Jews, from generation to generation; and as such it was received by the reverend General of the Order, Aymericus, whose it is. Such some learned Jews proved it to be, having made certain literal experiments, in presence of me, brother Marsilius, and of the reader, Perpynian, and of the brother, Peter Labius. Which tokens, either are not the same, or not so perfect in older rolls, as I have found by experience in many very ancient rolls. This roll, therefore, is to be looked upon as genuine, and to be handled with reverence, because written by so great an author, and ordered by the Holy Ghost, after the burning of the law, given as an original for other manuscripts, and preserved so many ages. And what is no less, that we and the Jews believe, it was shewn in the temples, on the greatest solemnities, in the presence of the fulfiller of the law, God himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

"This appears by the character," says Montfaucon, referring to the inscription, "to have been written in the days of Aymericus, General of the Order, who enjoyed that dignity in the year of our Lord 1308.

This makes it plain, that they are much mistaken who think there are no Hebrew Bibles, written above four hundred years ago ; for it is four hundred years since this manuscript was presented to Aymericus, which was then looked upon as so very ancient: and though what they say of its being written by Ezra's own hands looks like a fable, yet it cannot be denied to have been of some antiquity when presented to Aymericus."\*

In addition to the above inscription, which is in Latin, there is another in Hebrew, as follows:—  
“ This is the book of the Law of Moses, which was writ by Ezra the scribe ; and he read it in the sight of the multitude, men and women ; and he stood in a wooden tower ” (pulpit).

That this is the autograph of Ezra, may justly be questioned : Dr. Kennicott, nevertheless, considers it as very ancient, and not less than nine hundred years old.

It was long the boast of the Venetians that they possessed the autograph of Mark's Gospel, but the claims of the manuscript to such a distinction have been very satisfactorily disproved. It is written upon *charta bombycina*, paper made of cotton, of a faded green colour, and forms a thin square volume, covered with plates of silver gilt. It was obtained from Aquileia, entire, with the exception of the last eight leaves, which had been previously given to the Emperor Charles IV. in 1355. This fragment is

• Montfaucon's *Travels through Italy*, p. 436.

now kept at Prague, and has the following testimonial in Latin :—

“ I, Charles IV., by the grace of God, king of the Romans, always august, and king of Bohemia, saw the book of St. Mark’s Gospel, written with his own hand, entire from the beginning to the end, in seven quires, in the custody of the patriarch of the church of Aquileia : which book was preserved in the said church by the blessed Hermagoras, and by the said church of Aquileia to this day : which said blessed Hermagoras received that book from the hands of St. Peter ; and also from St. Peter, at the request and by the resignation of St. Mark, had the prelateship of the said church of Aquileia : of which book, upon my request to the patriarch and chapter of the said church of Aquileia, I obtained these two last quires of the aforesaid book ; and the other five going before them remained in the aforesaid church ; and this I writ with my own hand, in the year of the incarnation 1355, on the eve of All Saints, the ninth of my reign.”

The Venetian MS. is written in Latin, a sufficient proof that it is not the autograph of Mark. It is supposed now to have been written in the sixth century.

The fate of the originals of the sacred writings has been long buried in oblivion, and but little information is afforded us by antiquity, to enable us to form a conjecture as to the date, or the means of their destruction. The following testimony has been cited to prove the existence of an autograph of

the Gospel of John, in the fourth century :—" The Gospel of the evangelist John, written with his own hands, is, by the Divine goodness, still preserved in the most holy church of the Ephesians, where it is held in veneration by the believers." This purports to be the language of Peter, bishop of Alexandria; but there are good reasons to suspect both the authenticity of the passage, and the testimony which it contains. Had the fact been as here stated, some other writer would have mentioned it; a document so valuable and so easily accessible, on account of the commercial and ecclesiastical importance of Ephesus, would have been repeatedly consulted by the early commentators: Origen, who travelled through the East expressly in search of manuscripts, must have met with it had it been extant in his time. Nor is the passage which is cited from Tertullian to prove the existence of *autographa* when he flourished, at the close of the second and the commencement of the third centuries, at all conclusive upon the point. In his book *de Præscrip. Heretic.* c. 36, he says:—" If you will indulge your curiosity, and give it both a useful and extensive range, in the affairs of your salvation, be pleased to take a view of, and read over, the apostolic churches, where the chairs of the apostles do now preside, in their respective places, where their authentic and original epistles, the very images of their voice and person, are now recited and exhibited. Do you live in Achaia? There is Corinth. Are you not far removed from Macedonia? You have Philippi and Thessalonica. Are



you nigh unto Asia? There is Ephesus; or, if you border upon Italy, there is Rome." Archdeacon Travis understands the words of Tertullian, *literæ authenticæ*, to mean the autographs of the apostles. But this sense is very doubtful, if not entirely untenable; as in the tract *de Monogamia*, after having given the Latin version of a passage, he states that it was differently read in *Græco authentico*, meaning the original Greek, as contradistinguished from a translation. The passage merely means, that the apostolic churches possessed the genuine and unadulterated epistles of their founders: to attribute to it any thing further, to infer from it that the very chairs in which the apostles sat, or that the very epistles which they wrote were then in existence at Rome, or Corinth, or Ephesus, betrays a singular forgetfulness of Tertullian's rhetorical style.

The allegation of indolence or negligence cannot justly be advanced against the early Christians, for losing the originals of the apostolic writings. It is supposed that the *autographa* were preserved in archives, or *tabularia sacra*, and not suffered to be generally read, lest they should be injured by the frequent handling of the readers. They, however, perished when persecution scattered the societies, destroyed their churches, and consigned their books to the flames. An old chronicler, Robert of Gloucester, thus speaks of the persecution of Dioclesian:—

—“ Christenemen, that he fonde. to strong deth he brogte,  
Chirches he fel al a doune ther ne maste mon stonde  
And al the bokes, that he myght finde in eny londe  
He wolde let hem berne amid the heye strete.”

The Emperor Julian gave no quarter to christian literature when it fell into his hands ; and when the frequency as well as violence of the early persecutions is remembered, we are at no loss to account for the destruction of the originals of the New Testament. Julian thus wrote to one of his officers respecting the library of George of Cappadocia, the Arian bishop of Alexandria :—

“ To Ecdicus, Prefect of Egypt.

“ Some delight in horses, some in birds, and some in wild beasts. I, from my childhood, have always been inflamed with a passionate love for books. I think it absurd to suffer these to fall into the hands of wretches, whose avarice gold alone cannot satiate, as they are also clandestinely endeavouring to pilfer these. You will therefore oblige me extremely by collecting all the books of George. He had many, I know, on philosophical and rhetorical subjects, and many on the doctrine of the impious Galileans. *All these I would have destroyed* ; but lest others more valuable should be destroyed with them, let them all be carefully examined. The secretary of George may assist you in this disquisition, and if he acts with fidelity, he shall be rewarded with freedom ; if not, he may be put to the torture. I am not unacquainted with this library, for when I was in

Cappadocia George lent me several books to transcribe, which I afterwards returned to him."

The spread of Christianity during the first and second centuries occasioned a demand for copies of the sacred writings; and it is probable that during the apostolic age the task of transcription commenced, to meet the wants of the churches as they were planted. Many causes must, however, have contributed to prevent the rapid multiplication of the Scriptures; the scarcity of skilful writers among the Christians, and the danger which attended the undertaking. But when the Roman empire became professedly christian, the copyists were liberally rewarded, and even the imperial pen was frequently employed in transcribing the sacred text. Theodosius is said to have written a copy of the Gospels in letters of gold; and the *chrysographia*, or persons employed in this ornamental writing, formed a distinct class of copyists. When the religious houses were established, writing became the favourite employ of the monastic leisure, and most of the manuscript Scriptures which we have in our possession have issued from the *scriptorium*, or *domus antiquarii*, attached to every great abbey. Constantine, in a letter to Eusebius, directed him to procure fifty Greek Bibles for the use of the people of Constantinople.

"Victor Constantinus Maximus Augustus to Eusebius:—

"In that city which bears our name (Constantinople), by the assistance of God our Saviour's

providence, a vast multitude of men have joined themselves to the most holy church. Whereas, therefore, all things do there receive a very great increase, it seems highly requisite that there should be more churches erected in that city. Wherefore do you most willingly receive that which I have determined to do. For it seemed fit to signify to your prudence, that you should order fifty copies of the divine Scriptures (the provision and use thereof you know to be chiefly necessary for the instruction of the church,) to be written on well-prepared parchment, by artificial transcribers of books, most skilful in the art of accurate and fair writing; which copies must be very legible and easily portable, in order to their being used. Moreover, letters are despatched away from our clemency to the rationalist of the diocesis,\* that he should take care for the providing of all things necessary, in order to the finishing of the said copies. This, therefore, shall be the work of your diligence, to see that the written copies be forthwith provided. You are also empowered, by the authority of this our letter, to have the use of two public carriages in order to their conveyance; for by this means those which are transcribed fair, may most commodiously be conveyed even to our sight; to wit, one of the deacons of your church

\* Diocesis, or Diocæsis, was originally a civil government, composed of various provinces: the *Katholikon*, or *rationalist*, was one of the civil governors or officers; hence the ecclesiastical term *diocese* for the jurisdiction of a bishop, and *diocesan*, applied to a bishop in relation to his clergy.

being employed in the performance hereof, who, when he comes to us, shall be made sensible of our bounty. God preserve you, dear Brother !”

This order, as Eusebius relates, was immediately attended to: “ We sent him ternions and quaternions, magnificently adorned, as appears by the emperor’s answer, contained in a letter sent to us upon another occasion.” It was certainly customary, before the close of the fourth century, to have a Bible, or some portion of the sacred volume, lodged in some part of the sacred edifices, where the people might go and read at their leisure.

“ Si quem sancta tenet meditandi in lege voluntas,  
Hic paterit residens sacris intendere libris.”

*Paulin. Nolan. Ep. 12. ad Severum.*

And the terms of Constantine’s letter lead us to suppose, that the Bibles he ordered of the bishop of Cæsarea were intended to be placed for this purpose in the churches of Constantinople.

The transcription of the sacred volume was esteemed one of the most commendable acts of piety. “ The antiquarius,” says Cassiodorus, “ inflicts as many wounds on Satan as he produces copies.” “ As we cannot,” says Guigo, “ preach the word with our lips, let us do it with our hands; for as many books as we transcribe, so many heralds of the truth do we send forth.” Peter the Venerable, writing to Gislebert, a recluse, exhorts him to diligence in this exercise,—“ For so you may become a silent preacher of the divine word; and though

your tongue be mute, your hand will speak aloud in the ears of many people. And in future times, after your death, the fruit of your toils will remain, even as long as these books will endure." In the monasteries of the Morea, the Ægean Islands, and Asia Minor, an immense number of manuscripts were executed, and especially in the religious houses upon Mount Athos, the "holy mountain," a lofty promontory which stretches from the Macedonian coast far into the Ægean sea. Nor were the abbeys and monasteries of western Europe less renowned for the multiplication of the sacred volume by their occupants; and the cloisters of some of them still retain the stone desks, attached to the pillars, upon which the task was pursued. Monachism seemed formed expressly for the purpose of handing down the intellectual productions of the ancient world, sacred and profane, through a period in which they would inevitably have perished, without some such extraordinary provision. The employment of transcription was perfectly congruous to those physical habits which the inert life of the monks induced: it allayed the tortures of listlessness; it did not interfere with the stated formalities of religion; and an opinion of meritoriousness, attached to the service, animated the diligence of the labourer.

" Meanwhile along the cloister's painted side,  
The monks—each bending low upon his book,  
With head on hand reclined—their studies plied;  
Forbid to parley, or in front to look,  
Lengthways their regulated seats they took;

The strutting prior gazed with pompous mien,  
And wakeful tongue prepared with prompt rebuke,  
If monk asleep in sheltering hood was seen ;  
He wary often peeped beneath that russet screen,  
Hard by against the window's adverse light,  
Where desks were wont in length of row to stand,  
The gowned artificers inclined to write,  
The pen of silver glistening in the hand."

Evidence is not wanting to prove the care employed by the copyists in making correct transcriptions. "A devoted scribe," says Trithemius, "when he has carefully written a book, compares it anew with the original, and subjects it to a diligent revision." When Baithen, one of the disciples of Columba, requested him to permit one of the brethren to read over and correct a copy of the Psalter which he had written, he replied that it had been already examined, and that there was only *one* error in it, which was the want of the vowel *i* in a single instance. Sometimes, however, the copyists would insert a gloss of their own upon any particular passage, or an interpretation taken out of the Fathers, distinguishing it from the text\* by the use of smaller characters, inserting a line under it, or placing it at the side of the page. The following specimen of this method of writing the Scriptures, is taken from an old manuscript of the Vulgate version of the New Testament.

\* The word *text* is familiar to all. We have it from the Romans, who, from the similitude between spinning and weaving, and the art of composing, applied to the latter several expressions common to the former. Cicero has *texere orationem*, and *contexere carmen*. The later Roman writers employ the word *textus* in the sense of a piece or composition, and by excellence it came to denote the Word of God.

## MATTHEW vii. 23.

Nonnovit lux  
tenebras. I. non  
aspicit, quas si  
aspicerit tene-  
bræ non essent.

*Et tunc confitebor illis quia*  
in nullo approvavi, sed reprobavi .  
*nunquam novi vos . dis-*  
*cedite a me omnes qui opera-*  
non hos novit, ergo eos, qui mandata  
ejus quia custodiunt  
*mini iniquitatem.*

qui operamini,  
non dicit qui  
operati estis.  
ne tollat pœ-  
nitentiam, sed  
qui in iudicio  
licet non ha-  
beatis faculta-  
tem peccandi  
tamen habetis  
affectum.

An old Bible, written probably before the time of Wicliff, in the possession of the late Dr. Adam Clarke, has the glosses incorporated with the text, and only distinguished from it by a line drawn underneath: the line evidently added by a later hand. The following are specimens:—

“Blynde men seen, crokid men wandren, mesels ben maad clean, deaf men heeren, deed men rysen agein, pore men ben taken to prechynge the gospel, or ben maad kepers of the gospel.” Matt. xi. 5.

“Heroude tetrarcha, *that is, prince of the fourth parte.*” Luke iii. 1.

This method of writing the Scriptures has undoubtedly given rise to a multitude of various readings, for the marks of distinction being forgotten or omitted, the gloss was often considered as an integral part of the text, and entered accordingly by succeeding copyists.

The mention of various readings may excite in the minds of the unlearned a suspicion as to the integrity of the sacred text; but to those acquainted with the nature and laws of criticism, the existence of varieties of reading will not invalidate the purity of the sacred records. Absolute accuracy could only have been secured by continued miracle. By the



employment of copyists ignorant of Greek, an unavoidable circumstance in barbarous ages—by their hurrying the work to increase their profits—by the demand for the Scriptures compelling them to commence transcriptions before they had acquired that technical accuracy of eye, ear, and hand, necessary to ensure correctness—by inadvertence and carelessness verbal errors would necessarily be introduced, which could only have been prevented by the constant intervention of God. But these errors are not of that character as to shake the integrity of the text; and as their prevention was not necessary to preserve the stream of revelation pure and unadulterated, a special divine intervention would have been superfluous. To preserve the sense of Scripture, and the phraseology, as far as its correct exposition is dependent upon words and phrases, are alone important. The writers of the New Testament, when quoting the Old, seem anxious only to give the true sense: hence they often depart from the exactness of the Hebrew text, and quote the Septuagint version in preference to it. Precisely similar varieties of reading occur in the classical historians and poets, as in the sacred volume; but no fact of Greek or Roman history is rendered doubtful from this cause. The momentous articles of our faith are happily not dependent upon minute peculiarities of text; and though it is in many respects important to ascertain and substitute a genuine reading, yet no man would be less a Trinitarian if he read *κυριου* for *θεου* in Acts xx. 28,

admitted the punctuation of his adversaries in Rom. ix. 5, or yielded to their preference of OC to OC in 1 Tim. iii. 16. The Vulgate edition, and that of Griesbach, teach the same facts, and doctrines, and morals. From all the copies written and printed in existence, from ancient versions and commentaries, we maintain that a text pure and incorrupt may be formed; that there is no document in the whole compass of antiquity whose integrity may be so confidently asserted as the Bible; and that, if the Scriptures we now have are not the same identical Scriptures as those read in the houses and temples of the primitive Christians, neither is our *Æneid* that which Virgil wrote, nor our *Iliad* that which all Greece admired.

The following specimen of various readings is from Herodotus:—

|                                            |                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Cap. 1. upon the advice                    | upon taking counsel of              |
| 4. Cambyzes preparing<br>an expedition     | preparing an expedition<br>Cambyzes |
| 5. which belongs to the<br>Syrians         | the land belongs to the<br>Syrians  |
| from hence is Egypt                        | from this indeed is Egypt           |
| 8. Orotal                                  | Ourotal                             |
| 13. Other such like things                 | such like things                    |
| 14. they were there<br>and their necks     | they passed by<br>but their necks   |
| 16. otherwise                              | but otherwise                       |
| 25. his troops to remain                   | his troops to remain there          |
| 28. bears a white spot                     | a white spot                        |
| 31. administer justice to<br>the Persians. | administer justice to them          |

It will be seen that many of these various readings are purely grammatical—many only transpositions of words—many arising from merely a different division of letters or words; and, in fact, of those

authors of whom a considerable number of independent MSS. has been preserved, the important variations are a very small fraction when compared with the unimportant. Out of a hundred thousand various readings in the text of the New Testament, it would be hard to select one hundred of the slightest consequence to the sense of the passages where they occur; and in that number there would not be more than one or two which affect questions of fact, of doctrine, or of practice.

When we consider that book which has thus come down to us, apart from its divine inspiration—as written by men of like passions with ourselves—there is a variety of circumstances which must recommend it to the notice of persons of taste and refinement. There is its unrivalled eloquence—its beautiful poetry—its pure morals—its historical information,—on the ground of which it cannot be too highly estimated, besides its use in explaining many otherwise unaccountable phenomena in the natural, political, and moral world. Its antiquity renders it an object of the deepest interest; it goes back to far distant times, and was probably the first literary production that was ever penned. In tracing its history we see it invested with an undying vitality, and strikingly are its claims to divinity attested by its wonderful preservation. It has had to encounter the most virulent and persevering opposition: it has been banished from the homes of their subjects by kings and princes: physical force and intellectual ability have been arrayed against it: the

collected might of the greatest monarchy of ancient times was employed for its destruction; but its various assailants waged an unavailing war against it. Though more frequently proscribed and burnt than any other book, or than all books put together, so far from perishing, the fact of its abiding for ever is now made certain. It will withstand, as it has withstood, the ravages of time, which have destroyed man and his noblest works; and while "all flesh is grass, and the glory of man is as the flower of grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever." It thus partakes of the immutable character of its Divine original: it is the "everlasting gospel;" more durable than if graven with an iron pen upon the rock: never will it perish out of the church in time, and its truths will be remembered in eternity, and be in operation there for good or for evil, according as they have been rejected or received.

But it is as a divine revelation—as a manual of heavenly instruction—that the Bible powerfully appeals to our attention, and commends itself to our regards. It claims our notice on the ground of its discoveries, for it comes to man with the most momentous and interesting communications—communications, with reference to moral and religious truth, which neither human wit nor human wisdom could possibly have made known. It tells us of the past history of our world, and of the grandeur of its destiny—what we were, what we are, and what we shall be. In its pages we have the character of God drawn out to us in distinct and ample portraiture—

declaring not only that "He is," but that he is the "rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." It exhibits him as the Creator and the Governor of the world, holy without spot, just without partiality, and good without change, presiding over the affairs of nations and marking out the paths of men. For this view of the Divine Being we are indebted exclusively to the volume of inspired truth; for though the "heavens" have declared to some minds of a higher order the glorious fact of His existence, yet nature, which taught them this truth, instructed them no farther. When the inquiry was proposed, Where and What is God? no answer was returned to the question, or at best a doubtful and uncertain one. Previous to the publication of the inspired oracles, the grossest notions prevailed among the vulgar upon this subject: the opinions of the philosophers of the different schools were also confused and contradictory; the "world by wisdom knew not God." This truth now stands out to our gaze with peculiar majesty and glory in the Christian Scriptures; and so powerfully did it appeal to the unsophisticated reason of mankind upon its first publication, that there ceased to be "lords many, and gods many," wherever the revelation extended itself: the human mind found satisfaction upon this great and primary doctrine: it attained a resting-place, which it had not before known, when the marvellous light of revealed religion broke in upon it; and the peasantry of Christendom are now familiar with a class of ideas, respecting the Divine existence and character,

which the profoundest minds in antiquity sought without success.

But among the discoveries of revealed truth, there is one above all others most deeply interesting to us as fallen creatures ; and that is, how man may be just with God ; how the guilt he has amassed may be pardoned without being encouraged ; how forgiveness may be attained by those whom the Divine law has condemned already. A solution of this important matter is one of the sayings of the "prophecy of this book : " it shows us man sinning, but God saving : the guilty pair driven from their Paradise, but a way opened for the return of their posterity to another and a better : the Son of God undertaking for us, and amid the impressive solemnities of Calvary laying a foundation for the free and honourable exercise of mercy to the race of Adam. Are we guilty ? this is the word of reconciliation. Are we in bondage ? here the prison doors are opened to the captive, pardon is offered to the offender, peace to the distressed, hope to the despairing, and the kingdom of heaven unto all believers.

The Bible, also, claims our attention, on account of its moral tendencies and beneficial effects. Commencing its existence almost at the same era as the natural sun, it has, during its career, like that luminary, been ever shedding light upon our race. It shows us the fountain from whence have proceeded those streams of vice and misery that have deluged our world : in its pages no sin is smiled upon, no

impiety is countenanced: an unfriendly voice is lifted up against human crime: hell is unfolded as the eternal dwelling-place of ungodly souls, and heaven is revealed as the exclusive habitation of purified spirits. It is obvious, therefore, that such a system of truth must, wherever it is received, be productive of the most beneficial effects, and exercise a moral influence as powerful as its revelations of doctrine are lofty and important. Innumerable testimonies we have of this: whenever its authority is recognised and its precepts are obeyed, it operates favourably, and that in the most marked and decisive manner, upon the character and condition of man: it rescues him from the thralldom of vice and passion: it sets him free from the bonds of iniquity: it lessens the mass of human misery; and produces in the moral world a change represented in the language of prophecy by that which takes place in the natural landscape, when the wilderness becomes pools of water, and the desert is turned into the garden of the Lord. At the era of its first publication, not only individuals but nations participated in its benefits. The temples of Paganism were crumbled into dust, its idols banished, and the fabrics, which had required the wealth and superstition of ages to erect, were converted into desolate and abandoned ruins. Infanticide and human sacrifices in the ancient states were abolished—the chains of domestic slavery in Europe were broken—war received a milder character—refinement and delicacy of manners were introduced into society—

the character and condition of woman were exalted, and by that means man became humanized—and to that period, the foundation of that civilization which now exists around us, must primarily be referred. Such effects have been produced by the Divine word; and, were its principles carried out into universal operation, what a change would be produced in the aspect of our world! “Violence” would no more be heard, “wasting” or “destruction” no more be seen: every knee would bend in adoration, and every tongue would speak in praise: every house would become a house of prayer, and every heart be a habitation for God; and from the “rivers even unto the ends of the earth” each morning and evening sun would witness one universal family uniting in the worship of their common Father and Lord.

The Bible is thus, when rightly and properly used, one of the greatest advantages that can be conferred upon us. Attachment to it has ever been one of the evidences which piety has given of its existence. Its study is plainly and repeatedly commanded; it has been the practice of good men in all ages to consult its oracles, and from their serious investigation they have returned strengthened in faith, animated in hope, and encouraged to “abound in every good word and work.” In the seasons of distress it has been a source of unspeakable consolation, cheering the saddened mind by the promises it records and by the prospects it unveils. So highly did David prize it, that he declares that it is “more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold;”



that its statutes were his songs in the house of his pilgrimage ; and so much has religion valued it, as to say with Job, "I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food." To derive, however, advantage from Divine truth, it is necessary that it should be cordially embraced and practically recognised. We should not only "seek out of the book of the Lord, and read," but reduce to practice what is placed before the eye ; we should "know the Scriptures," which are "able to make wise unto salvation ;" we should aspire after the reverent and submissive mind of Samuel, who, when he heard the voice of Him whose glory overshadowed the Jewish mercy-seat, exclaimed, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

That our Lord was carefully instructed in early life in a knowledge of the Sacred Volume, as far as it was completed in his day, we may conclude from the devout character of his parents. His mind was stored with its doctrines, duties, promises, and revelations ; and hence, when disputing in his public ministry with the artful Scribe and the subtle Pharisee, he displayed the utmost familiarity with its sacred contents. In his temptation on the Mount, he took the "sword of the Spirit" to resist the suggestions of the tempter, and reminded him that "It is written." In the synagogue of Nazareth he seems to have officiated as the public reader of the Scriptures. When journeying with two of his disciples to Emmaus, he, in that affecting interview, "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the

things concerning himself, beginning at Moses and the prophets."

The primitive Christians copied the example of their Lord and Master, and made the study of the Divine word an important part of religious duty. "We meet together," says Tertullian, "to hear the holy Scriptures rehearsed to us, that so, according to the quality of the times, we may be either forewarned or corrected by them; for certainly with these holy words we nourish our faith, exert our hope, seal our confidence, and by these inculcations are the better established in obedience to the Divine commands."\* When Origen was a child, his father put the Sacred Volume into his hands, and many of its most interesting passages he committed to memory. Jerome read the Scriptures before he went to his meals; and Valens, a deacon of the church of Jerusalem, could correctly repeat whole pages of them. Eusebius relates of John, an Egyptian confessor, that when his eyes were put out he was able to repeat any place in the Old or New Testament; "which," says he, "when I first heard him do in the public congregation, I supposed him to have been reading in a book, till coming near and finding how it was, I was struck with great admiration at it." Augustine, in his younger days, had carefully studied Plato and Cicero, despising the writings of Christians: but when the truth came home to his heart, he gladly "sat at the feet of Jesus," and re-

\* Apol. c. 3.

ceived the law from his mouth." "With eagerness," he observes in his Confessions, "I took up the Inspired Volume, and particularly the Apostle Paul; and those questions in which he once had seemed inconsistent with himself and the law and the prophets, were no more." After speaking of the benefits he derived from the apostle's writings, he says, "The Platonic books had nothing of this; nor the face of piety, the tears of confession, the sacrifice of a troubled spirit, a broken and contrite heart, salvation, the spouse, the holy city, the earnest of the Holy Spirit, the cup of our redemption. In them no one hears, 'Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It is one thing to see a land of peace at a distance, with no practicability of attaining it, and another to pursue the right road towards it, under the care of the heavenly Commander, who made the road for our use. I was wonderfully affected with these views, while I read the least of Thine apostles, and I considered Thy works and trembled."\*

The violence of Pagan persecution induced the most exalted instances of heroism on the part of the primitive Christians, in defending and preserving their sacred books. Felix of Tibura, in Africa, being apprehended as a Christian, was commanded by Maquilian, curator, or civil magistrate of the city, to deliver up all books and writings belonging to his church, that they might be burnt. The

\* Confess. lib. vii.

martyr replied, that it was better he himself should be burnt. The magistrate sent him to the proconsul at Carthage, by whom he was delivered over to the prefect of the Prætorium, who was then in Africa. This officer, offended at his bold and generous confession, commanded him to be loaded with heavier bolts and irons, and, after he had kept him nine days in a close dungeon, to be put on board a vessel, saying, he should stand his trial before the emperor. For four days he lay under the hatches of the ship, between the horses' feet, without eating or drinking. He was landed at Agrigentum, in Sicily; and when brought by the prefect as far as Venosa, in Apulia, his irons were knocked off, and he was again asked whether he had the Scriptures, and would deliver them up? "I have them," said he, "but will not part with them." The prefect instantly condemned him to be beheaded. "I thank thee, O Lord," said the martyr, "that I have lived fifty-six years, have preserved the Gospel, and have preached faith and truth. O, my Lord Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth, I bow my head to be sacrificed to thee, who livest to all eternity." Worthy of association with Felix, is Euplius of Catana, in Sicily. Being seized with the Gospels in his hand, he was examined on the rack:—"Why do you keep the Scriptures forbidden by the emperor?" He answered, "Because I am a Christian. Life eternal is in them; he that gives them up, loses life eternal." When ordered away to execution, the Gospels were hung about his neck, and the public

crier proclaimed before him, "This is Euplius, the Christian, an enemy to the gods and to the emperor." He was beheaded on the 12th of August, in the year 304.

The practice of bibliomancy, or divination by the Bible, cannot be too strongly condemned. It prevailed in an early age of the church, and even in our own country it was exceedingly common hardly half a century ago. The practice was called *Sortes Sanctorum*, or *Sortes Sacræ*, *Lots of the Saints*, or *Sacred Lots*, and consisted in suddenly opening or dipping into the Bible, and regarding the passage that first met the eye as predicting the future lot of the inquirer. The *Sortes Sanctorum* succeeded the *Sortes Homericæ* and *Sortes Virgilianæ* of the Pagans, among whom it was common to take the work of some favorite poet, and to take the first verse that presented itself to notice as a prognostication of future events. The Persian tyrant Nadir Shah twice decided upon besieging cities, by opening upon verses of the celebrated poet Hafiz. Bibliomancy was practised not only in the common occurrences of life, but also upon the most important occasions, as the election of bishops, the installation of abbots, and the reception of canons: not unfrequently, however, passages the most irrelevant, and apparently unhappy, were stumbled upon. When Athanasius was nominated to the patriarchate of Constantinople, by the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Cavacalla, the archbishop of Nicomedia, consecrated him. Having opened the Bible,

the first words that struck his eyes were, "For the devil and his angels." The bishop of Nice, who saw that some unfortunate passage had been met with, adroitly turned over the leaf, when the following verse was read aloud:—"The birds of the air may come and lodge in the branches thereof." No token for good being apparent in these words, an unpleasant impression was produced upon the people, to diminish which, they were reminded that a former archbishop of Constantinople had met with a circumstance more inauspicious, by lighting upon the verse,—“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,”—and yet his episcopate had neither been less happy nor less tranquil than his predecessor's. In the same dilemma Theophanes was placed, when consecrating the metropolitan of Chersonesus—the first consecration in which he was concerned, after his translation from the see of Cyzicus to the patriarchate of Constantinople. He met with these words—"If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch," which the public regarded as prognosticating evil to the patriarch and to the metropolitan. This custom of divination by the Bible still obtains, in Catholic and Protestant countries, among the ignorant peasantry; but in our own land it is to be hoped that it is nearly extinct.\*

\* The early Wesleyan ministers, who went much among the rural population, found bibliomancy prevalent in various districts. Their publications evidence this. Bradburn, in a funeral sermon, preached at Manchester in 1801, had occasion thus to address his audience:—"Great

To derive from the Divine word that profit which it is intended to impart ; for it to become to us a guide-book to the heavenly world, we should study its whole design and scope, read it habitually and *thoroughly*, with simplicity of mind, with self-application and self-examination ; for “ what was written aforetime was written for *our* instruction ;” it is the statute-book of the whole world ; not a lamp adapted merely to enlighten a few, but a grand pillar of fire, intended to direct the world, to cheer the camp of all the armies of Israel, on their way to the promised land. But, above all, fervent prayer is necessary for the influence of the “ Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth.” Naturally we have no right apprehension of spiritual objects, no proper sense of their importance and value, no relish for either the sacred duties or the hallowed truths which the Bible proposes to our notice : hence the necessity of prayer, that God may give us what we have not ourselves, the attentive and deeply interested spirit, the enlightened mind, and the understanding heart. It was the request of the Psalmist, “ Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law ; ” — “ Teach me thy statutes, make

care should be taken that we are not deceived by turning the Bible into a sort of *fortune book*, opening it, or dipping, as it were by chance, to see what God will tell us ! I have known pious men driven nearly to black despair for many weeks, by this dangerous practice ! Nor is the drawing or playing with what are called *scriptural cards* much better. That some great men have done so and have been directed right, when they knew not what to do, is nothing to the present purpose.” A similar caution, if I mistake not, occurs in Dr. Adam Clarke's Letter to a Preacher, though I have not the book at hand to refer to.

me to understand the way of thy precepts ; so shall I talk of thy wondrous works." It is the office of the Holy Spirit to do this ; to remove our natural insensibility to Divine truth ; to rend the veil of darkness, error, and delusion, from our minds ; to open the eyes of the understanding, and to conduct us to an acquaintance with those principles of doctrine and duty, which are necessary to secure our present peace and future happiness. We may be perfectly familiar with the facts of Christianity, with the doctrines of the Bible, in a state of nature ; we may admit them into our creed, but we do not feel their supreme importance ; we do not enter into their peculiar significance ; they do not exercise upon us their proper degree of moral influence and saving control, until a spiritual discernment is given unto us by Him who "searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." We are then made acquainted with the "truth as it is in Jesus," by the reception of its saving power ; we may have had before theoretical orthodoxy, but we have then practical wisdom ; we may have had before intellectual light, but we have then personal experience ; the knowledge of Divine truth may have had before a tabernacle in our heads, but it has then a temple in our hearts.



How lovely are thy tabernacles, Lord of Hosts!  
My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord!  
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.  
As the bird that findeth her house,  
As the swallow, a nest for her young,  
So I thine altars, O Lord of Hosts,  
My King and my God!  
Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;  
They are still praising Thee;  
Blessed is the man who trusteth in Thee,  
And thinketh of the way to Jerusalem!  
Should they pass through the valley of sorrow,  
They find it full of springs.  
Blessings be on Him who goeth before them!  
They increase in strength as they go on,  
Till they appear before God in Zion.  
O Lord of Hosts, hear my prayer!  
Give ear, O God of Jacob!  
O God, our shield, look down,  
Behold the face of thine anointed!  
A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.  
I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God,  
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.  
For Jehovah, our God, is a sun and shield;  
Jehovah giveth grace and glory.  
No good thing will be withheld from those that walk uprightly.  
O Lord of Hosts,  
Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!—*Psalm lxxxiv.*

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SANCTUARY.

To approach the Divine Being with expressions of adoration and gratitude, with acknowledgments of dependence, with supplications for continued favour, is one of the duties which both natural and revealed religion impose upon us ; receiving existence from Him, indebted to Him for its continuance, and for all those blessings which minister to its happiness, we are called upon, by principles of obligation, as well as the claims of law, to offer sacrifices of praise and acts of homage to our Creator, Governor, and Lord. For this purpose, in the earliest times, holy convocations were held upon a larger or smaller scale ; convocations of families or of members of the same household, as in the patriarchal ages : meetings were common in periods far removed from the present day, for objects of worship, to own the providence of God, and to ask his grace ; to seek his favour, and to crown him, by the acknowledgments of the living voice, Lord and Master of this terrestrial world. This practice, founded upon an obvious propriety, goes back to

the infancy of our race ; a sense of mutual want, a feeling of mutual obligation, naturally led good men to the exercise of sacred fellowship ; and the cause of individual piety was promoted by the solemn assemblies that were convened.

That public worship is a duty incumbent upon us, is evident from the precepts and examples of Scripture, from the practice of good men ; and from direct and inferential preceptive authority, we arrive at the conclusion, that to meet in holy convocation is a part of the Divine will concerning us.

The Jews were required by their law to gather together for the purpose of worship : on the Sabbath, there were solemn assemblies throughout the land. This is evident from various hortatory addresses :—“ O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker ; ”—“ Come unto his courts ; O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” The Psalmist makes the following reference to his past conduct in this respect : “ I had gone with the multitude ; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.” When the Divine judgments were apprehended, the prophets frequently summoned the people to fellowship in services of devotion, in order to avert the threatened calamity : “ Call a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders ; let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people.” The wilderness witnessed

the heaven-directed tribes collecting at regular intervals around the tabernacle of the Lord. Jerusalem three times a year received within its gates the male population of the holy land, to keep the festivals of their religion; and from the time of the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, the practice of synagogue worship cannot be questioned.

To repair to the "congregation of the faithful," is as clearly the duty of the Christian as it was the law to the Jew. The Apostle mentions it as an important mean of improving the religious character: "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." The command to publish the Gospel proceeds upon the supposed obligation of men to assemble to hear it: the word "Church," used to designate a Christian society, signifies an assembly for the transaction of business; and certainly spiritual engagements are meant, including the sacred exercises of prayer and praise, and reading the Scriptures. Some of the epistles are commanded to be read in the churches; and directions are prescribed for the Corinthians, how to conduct the exercises of prayer and prophecyings, "when they came together in the church." The prevalence of public worship among the devout part of mankind, from the earliest ages, is abundantly evident, not only from the records of holy writ, but from the very genius of religion. It is not an unsocial principle; it does not delight in

isolation ; it has no sympathy with the dark monastic cell ; but, on the contrary, attaches all its possessors to the communion of saints.

The purposes contemplated in the institution of public worship, and the moral influence which it exerts upon any community, are so important and desirable, that it must be regarded as one of the most benevolent of those statutes which the great Lawgiver has given to his creatures. It is an open avowal, given by the church, of its confidence in the truths of natural and revealed religion : the name of God is confessed before the world ; his claims upon the obedience and gratitude of his creatures are solemnly recognised ; his will is unfolded, and that accompanied with acts which are calculated to induce a frame of mind suitable to a right apprehension of its nature, and a due impression of its importance. The meeting of a large number of individuals together, to unite their prayers and praises, and to hear what God the Lord will speak, exerts a powerful, though often unobserved, influence upon the personal character and the domestic relations ; while that instruction, which is imparted by the faithful exposition of the “ mind of the Spirit,” diffuses abroad the principles of morality and religion ; enlightens and gives activity to the conscience ; and exercises such a directive influence upon public opinion, that vice and virtue, truth and error, receive their meed of praise and shame. Those impressions of piety which the cares and distractions of the world tend to efface, are kept

alive and renewed by this appointment ; the invitations of mercy are regularly published to the guilty ; the consolations and hopes of religion are exhibited to the believing. The bond of union is strengthened in families by the habit of unitedly attending the sacred services of the sanctuary ; the ties of neighbourhood are also rendered firmer by the practice of religious association ; while the fact, that the rich and the poor, the high and the low, meet together before God, upon the same common ground as sinners—sufferers on account of the same transgression, participants in the same revelation of grace and mercy, and heirs of the same immortality of being—has a powerful though insensible influence in humbling the pride which superior rank tends to foster, and in correcting in the lower classes servility of spirit, without producing assumption.

With peculiar simplicity the public services of religion were conducted in the earlier ages of the world. No material fabrics, no costly sanctuaries were in use : the earth's surface, unsheltered and uncanopied, answered all the purposes of a temple to the patriarchs : there they reared their altars, and watched the smoke of their presented sacrifices ascending to the pure heaven above them. The shade afforded by the ample foliage of the terebinth trees, with which the countries inhabited by the patriarchs abounded, was also often selected for the performance of religious rites. "Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name

of the Lord."\* Worshipping in groves, and upon the tops of hills, was afterwards strictly prohibited by the Jewish law; because, though perfectly innocent in itself, superstition had abused the custom, and idolatrous nations had embraced it.—"Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees, near unto the altar of the Lord thy God."†

### I. THE TABERNACLE.

A pavilion-temple is the first edifice of which we read, dedicated to the celebration of public religious worship. This was erected by the command of God, given during that mysterious and awful interview which Moses had with the Deity on the Mount. The whole of the tribes of Israel were called upon to contribute to its construction and ornament. The riches which they had brought with them out of Egypt were cheerfully surrendered for this purpose; and the most skilful artificers among them were employed, under the superintendence of Bezaleel and Aholiab. In the neighbourhood of Sinai the black acacia abounded, supplying ample materials for the structure. On the first day, of the first month, of the second year, after the departure from Egypt, the tabernacle was

\* Gen. xxi. 33.

† Deut. xvi. 21. The pleasantness of the shade rendering the service agreeable to the worshippers, seems, according to Virgil, to have been the reason of Dido's building the temple of Juno in a delightful grove.

"*Lucus in urbe fuit media: lætissimus umbra  
Hic templum Junoni ingens Sidonia Dido  
Condebat.*"

finished. It stood in an open space or area, a hundred and fifty feet long, and seventy-five feet wide. The tabernacle itself was forty-five feet long, fifteen wide, and fifteen high. It was made of the wood of the black acacia ; and to defend it from the weather, an awning of skins was thrown over it. The interior was divided into two unequal parts : in the first, or holy place, stood the golden altar of incense, the golden candlestick, and the table of shew-bread ; in the second, or holy of holies, the ark of the covenant was deposited, containing the tables of stone, upon which the law was written. In this mysterious chamber a solemn gloom constantly prevailed, except when the veil was partially lifted up to admit the entrance of the high priest : from the rest of the structure also the daylight was carefully excluded, being illuminated by the splendid chandelier, with its seven branches. This movable chapel was so contrived as to be taken to pieces, and put together at pleasure ; and thus it was carried from place to place by the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness. Afterwards it was set up in Gilgal, until the whole land of Canaan had been conquered ; then it was removed to Shiloh and to Nob : its final resting-place was Gibeah, where it remained until the ark was removed to the temple.

## II. RURAL ALTARS.

In the times of the Judges—or, according to the Rabbins, during the administration of Saul—various



places appear to have been set apart for the celebration of religious rites, in different parts of Judea. The covenant, which was made by the people under Joshua at Shechem, was buried by him "under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord."\* This cannot mean the place where the ark was stationed, for the tabernacle was then at a distance. We know that an altar had been previously erected upon Mount Ebal, which towered over the town of Shechem:† this then was the sanctuary of the Lord referred to, the place of an altar, where piety was accustomed publicly to pay its vows. The top of Mount Carmel appears also to have been consecrated to the performance of sacred rites. Elijah visited it in his famous contest with the priests of Baal; and we are told that "he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down." He did not erect one entirely new; he made use of materials already existing; an altar having been erected here in those times, when, for want of fixed places of worship, such structures were permitted. In preceding ages the mountain-top had been a scene of worship; regarded as a holy spot in Israel. It is remarkable that this altar, re-edified by Elijah, and made the scene of such a splendid transaction as that which occurred under his auspices, survived the overthrow of the royal houses of Israel and Judah, and was an object of religious respect when the conquering Roman came into the land. Tacitus

\* Joshua xxiv. 26.

† Deut. xxvii. 5, 6.

observes, "Between Syria and Judea stands a mountain, known by the name of Mount Carmel, on the top of which a god is worshipped, under no other title than that of the place, and, according to ancient usage, without a temple, or even a statue. An altar is erected in the open air, and there adoration is paid to the presiding deity. *Nec simulachrum Deo, aut templum situm tradidere majores; aram tantum et reverentiam.* On this spot Vespasian offered a sacrifice."\* From this description—the mount, the absence of a temple, no image, but a simple altar, very ancient—there can be no doubt but that it was the identical altar of Jehovah, before which Vespasian stood, in his time consecrated to the lying vanities of Heathenism.

### III. THE TEMPLE.

The second edifice erected for the public services of religion was the temple. This was built upon much the same plan as the pavilion we have noticed, but of larger dimensions, and of more durable materials. A regular treaty was entered into with the Tyrians respecting it; the Jewish monarch agreeing to supply them with corn, in return for their cedar timber from the forests of Lebanon. The Sidonian artisans, whose skill is celebrated in the Homeric poems, were solicited by Solomon to engage in the undertaking. The spot selected as the site of the temple was the eminence of Moriah, the Mount of Vision, or the height seen afar from the adjacent

\* Tacit. Hist. lib. ii. c. 78.

country; the place to which tradition points as the scene of Abraham's trial and obedience. Immense labour was required to level the cap of the mountain, and to face its precipitous sides to the east and south with a wall of stone. Of the general character of the edifice we have but unsatisfactory details: it seems, however, to have been more celebrated for the costliness of its materials, than for the grace of its construction, or the boldness of its dimensions. It had neither the magnitude of the Egyptian, nor the harmony of the Grecian, nor the lightness of the modern Oriental architecture. Some writers have regarded the visionary temple of Ezekiel as a sketch from the material one of Solomon; but this is evidently incorrect, as the prophet's dimensions would make the building too large for the summit of Moriah, or for the whole area of Jerusalem. It was not in the interior of the temple that the principal ceremonies of religion took place, but in the open courts around it. The holy of holies, as in the ancient tabernacle, was the secret shrine of the Deity, only entered by one individual once a year; the holy place too, or the body of the building, was the peculiar station of the officiating priests: it was in the quadrangle without that the people assembled. Here stood the great tank for ablution, and the high altar for burnt-offerings; here the public and national religious rites were celebrated; this was also the scene of the processions, offerings, and sacrifices in which the multitude united.

— "Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric grew."

The temple arose in silence ; all the massive stones being so prepared as to be put together without the sound of any tool whatever. At length, after seven years and a half of labour, the building was completed ; and then, in a solemn and impressive manner, it was presented by Solomon as an offering to the Deity. He gathered the people together in the spacious courts, the priests standing around the great brazen altar : he himself occupied a raised throne of brass. The installation of the God of Israel in his new and appropriate dwelling commenced with sacrifice ; then followed the choral hymn ; and amid these sacred celebrations, He, who was the object of them, bowed the heavens and came down, and took possession of what had been erected for him. An insupportable splendour flashed from the holy of holies, and was hailed by the awe-struck multitude as the sign of a present and propitiated Divinity : it was the voice of God speaking to them in symbol, and saying, "The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for an habitation. This is my rest for ever ; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Who can conceive the wonder, the joy, the ecstasy of the assembled worshippers, at beholding this token for good ! The monarch himself was so overpowered by the scene, that he paused in the midst of his sublime prayer ; and as if struck with the improbability of the circumstance, he inquired, "But will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth ? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens

cannot contain Thee : how much less this house that I have made !”

Only for the space of little more than thirty years did the temple on Moriah retain its pristine splendour : it was first despoiled by Shishak, an Egyptian monarch ; and, after subsequent pillages and profanations, it was burnt by the captain-general of the king of Babylon. A vivid picture of the desolation of the holy hill, and the distress of the people on account of it, has been preserved in the elegies of Jeremiah.

“ The ways of Sion mourn ; none come up to her feasts ;  
All her gates are desolate, and her priests do sigh ;  
Her virgins wail ; herself, she is in bitterness.

He hath plucked up his golden wedge, he hath destroyed his Temple ;  
Jehovah hath forgotten made the solemn feast and Sabbath ;  
And in the heat of ire he hath rejected king and priest.

The Lord his altar hath disdained, abhorred his holy place,  
And to the adversary's hand given up his palace walls ;  
Our foes shout in Jehovah's house, as on a festal day.

Her gates are sunk into the earth ; he hath broke through her bars ;  
Her monarch and her princes are now among the Héathen ;  
The Law hath ceased ; the Prophets find no vision from Jehovah.

My eyes do fail with tears, and troubled are my bowels ;  
My heart's blood gushes on the earth, for the daughter of my people ;  
Children and suckling babes lie swooning in the squares.” •

A second structure was erected after the captivity upon the site of the first ; but it was far inferior to it in the splendour of its decorations and the richness of its materials. Some of the aged men, who remembered the first house in all its glory, wept at beholding the mournful contrast. The Jews reckon

• Lam. i. 4 ; ii. 7, 8, 10, 11.

these five particulars wanting in the latter house : the ark of the covenant, with the mercy-seat upon it ; the Urim and Thummim ; the holy fire upon the altar ; the spirit of prophecy ; and the Shekinah, or symbol of the Divine presence. But the Prophet Haggai was commanded to tell the desponding Jews, that all these deficiencies would be amply compensated hereafter, by His coming to the second temple whom their fathers had desired to see, but did not see in Solomon's more splendid edifice.

"Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold,  
Saith Jehovah of Hosts;  
Great shall be the glory of his house,  
The latter above the former,  
Saith Jehovah of Hosts;  
And in this place I will give peace,  
Saith Jehovah of Hosts." •

The "fathers" and the "ancient men" were weeping at the thought of their departed grandeur : to cheer their drooping minds, the intelligence of this passage was communicated unto them. Prophecy opened a vista into the future, and presented a sublime landscape to their view. Zion, denuded of some of her external ornaments, should be invested with a spiritual splendour, more illustrious than ever she had possessed. Though the Shekinah no more would beam from between the cherubims ; though the resplendent cloud was removed for ever from the mercy-seat ; though the sacred fire no more would glow upon the altar ; yet "the glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the

• Hag. ii. 8, 9.

former ;” the true Shekinah soon would hallow it with his presence ; and, visited by Him who is “ the brightness” of the Father’s “glory,” and the “express image of his person,” it would be rendered infinitely more illustrious than if its walls had been silver, its pillars crystal, or its roof spangled like the expanse of heaven.

For nine years Herod the Great was engaged in repairing the second temple, which, in the lapse of five centuries, had become decayed. Eighty thousand workmen were employed ; and the edifice was so far beautified and enlarged, as to be far more extensive than its predecessor, and hence called by some the third temple. From the Mount of Olives, or any of the environs contiguous to the city, it had a most magnificent appearance : being decorated with plates of gold, and the stones being white and glistening, it appeared like a mountain covered with snow ; and, when the sun rose upon it, it reflected a light so strong and dazzling, as to compel the spectator to turn away his gaze from it. According to the Jewish historian, several stones in the building were forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth. How natural the exclamation of the disciples, when viewing this immense structure from a distance, “ Master, see what manner of stones,” *ποταποὶ λίθοι*, what very large ones, “and what buildings are here !” And how unlikely to be accomplished, before the race of men then living should cease to exist, the prediction that was uttered, “ Seest thou these great buildings ? There

shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down !” \*

Frequently was this temple honoured with the personal presence of the Saviour. The “blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.” On one occasion “he was found in the temple in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.” In Solomon’s Porch our Lord was walking at the feast of the dedication : this was a piazza so called, because it stood upon a vast terrace which he had originally raised from a valley beneath, in order to enlarge the area on the top of the mountain, and make it equal to the plan of his intended building. Josephus represents this portico as the noblest work beneath the sun ; being elevated to such a prodigious height, that no one could look down from its flat roof into the valley beneath, without being seized with dizziness. The south-east corner of the roof of this portico, where the height was the greatest, is supposed to have been the *πτερύγιον*, pinnacle, or extreme angle, whence Satan tempted the Saviour to precipitate himself.

The Jews were enthusiastically attached to their great sacred edifice. When led captive into the land of the stranger, they turned with eager fondness to the remembrance of their holy hill ; and hence their poetry abounds with passionate eulogies and vivid descriptions of the temple-crowned eminence.

\* Mark xiii. 1.



“ The city whose foundation is in the holy mountains,  
 The gates of Zion, Jehovah loves  
 More than all the dwellings of Jacob.  
 Glorious it is to speak of thee,  
 O city of God!  
 Of Zion it is said,  
 This and that man was born in her:  
 He, the Most High, buildeth her.  
 When God reckoned up the people,  
 He wrote, This man was born there.”\*

In that beautiful though fanciful production by Frederick Strauss, “ Helon’s Pilgrimage to Jerusalem,” the feelings of a company of devout Jews going up to the city, at the time of a national festival, are described with vigour and truth. “ When they had proceeded about two sabbath-days’ journeys from Bethlehem, they approached the grave of Rachel. At another time, this place of the rest of Jacob’s beloved wife, the hardly-earned recompence of his labours, might have produced some melancholy emotions; but now such thoughts were banished by the universal joy. Helon remarked to Elisama, that this was not the time of which their prophet had spoken: ‘ In Rama was heard a voice, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children.’ The eager haste of the multitudes now increased with every step; and their impatience for the first sight of Jerusalem was expressed in the following Psalm:—

‘ Great is the Lord : and greatly to be praised  
 The mountain of his holiness.’ †

Expectation had reached the highest pitch. The last strophes were not completely sung; many were

\* Ps. lxxxvii.

† Ps. xlviii.

already silent, eagerly watching for the first sight of Jerusalem. All eyes were turned towards the north ; a faint murmur spread from rank to rank among the people ; only those who had been at the festival before continued the psalm, and these solitary scattered voices formed a solemn contrast with the silence of the rest of the multitude. Helon's heart was in his eye, and he could scarcely draw his breath. When the psalm was concluded, the instruments prolonged the sound for a moment ; and then all that mighty multitude, so lately jubilant, was still as death.

“ All at once the foremost ranks exclaimed, Jerusalem !— Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! resounded through the valley of Rephaim. ‘ Jerusalem, thou city built on high, we wish thee peace.’ The children dragged their parents forward with them, and all hands were lifted up to bless.

“ The high white walls of the holy city cast a gleam along the valley ; Zion arose with its palaces, and from Moriah the smoke of the offering was ascending to heaven. It was the hour of the evening sacrifice. Scarcely had the multitude recovered a little, when they began to greet the temple and the priests :

‘ Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord  
Who stand by night in the house of the Lord !  
Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary,  
And bless the Lord.  
So will Jehovah bless thee out of Zion ;  
He who made heaven and earth.’ ”\*

\* Ps. cxxxiv.

This same veneration had the Jews in our Lord's time for the second temple, as their ancestors had for the first. A disrespectful allusion, a disparaging expression respecting it, awakened the strongest indignation, and was resented as the greatest affront. In the course of his ministerial engagements, the Saviour was led to say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again;"\* a saying that was at once construed as a contemptuous allusion to the edifice. The statement was neither forgotten nor forgiven by the Jews: it rankled in their breasts as an expression which ought to be avenged; and hence, upon his trial, it was alleged against him, as something inexcusable, that he had been heard to say, "I am able to destroy this temple."† The affecting circumstances of his death did not soften the animosity they had conceived against him on this account, for, as he hung upon the cross, they exultingly addressed him, saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it again in three days, save thyself."‡ A body of soldiers was continually on guard to preserve the structure from any violence being offered to it: to these troops Pilate alluded, when the Pharisees and chief priests besought him to make the sepulchre secure; "Ye have a *watch*: go your way, and make it as secure as ye can."§ The commander of these soldiers was called the captain of the temple, or the officer of the temple-guard; "and as they spoke unto the

\* John ii. 19.

† Matt. xxvi. 61.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 40.

§ Matt. xxvii. 65.

people, the priests, and the *captain of the temple*, and the Sadducees came again." \* The building was not to be appropriated to any common or profane use; hence the Saviour drove out of its courts the buyers and sellers who made it a place of trade; and, lest any birds should pollute it, its summit was covered with sharp pointed spikes of gold, upon which they could not rest.

#### IV. THE SYNAGOGUE.

Synagogues, which towards the decline of the Jewish monarchy were thickly scattered over the Holy Land, were a kind of chapels of ease to the temple, and intended for the convenience of those who lived at too great a distance statedly to attend its worship. Sacrifices were only to be offered in the tabernacle or the temple; but the other exercises of religion were not restricted to any particular place; and hence, for the accommodation of those whose age, infirmities, or distance prevented them from travelling to Jerusalem, places were erected in the towns and villages, where the law was regularly read, and prayer and praise offered.

Little or no mention is made of synagogues in the Old Testament, though in the time of our Lord many thousands existed, and such frequent references are made to them in the New Testament. The period when they were first instituted has been variously conjectured: some suppose about the time of the Babylonish captivity, while others refer them

\* Acts iv. 1.

to a date as low as the age of the Asmonean princes. That they, or buildings analogous to them, had a much earlier origin, we may be inclined to believe from the fact, that without them the great bulk of the nation could so seldom have paid any public worship to their God. Besides, the Sabbath could not have been kept for many ages, according to the law, supposing that no other places of worship existed but the tabernacle and the temple: the law required a holy convocation on the Sabbath, an appointment which would doubtless not be neglected in the times of David, Samuel, and Joshua, the purest ages of the Israelitish church. Now, it was impossible for the people to repair to Jerusalem, or to the place where the ark was stationed, once a week, unless they were in the immediate neighbourhood; so that the inference is strong, that they had edifices for public worship near their own homes. This conclusion is strengthened by the observation of the Apostle James, who speaks of Moses being read in the synagogues "of old time." If the seventy-fourth Psalm refers to the invasion of the Chaldeans, it is plain that there were synagogues then in existence: "They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land."

The first part of the synagogue service, after the customary greeting, was a doxology, which was followed by the reading of the law of Moses, or portions out of the Prophets and *Hagiographa*. The Scriptures were read first in the original Hebrew,

and then rendered by an interpreter into the vernacular tongue, the Hebræ-aramæan. The person who read from the sacred volume placed upon his head a *tallith*, a covering which is in use in the present day. The next part of the service was prayer; and then followed the exposition of the Scriptures, answering to our preaching to the people. The preacher, whether in the synagogue or other places, always sat—the posture of our Lord when he delivered his sermon on the Mount. When, after he had read in the synagogue of Nazareth, the Saviour, instead of retiring to his place, sat down in the desk or pulpit, the people perceived by this action that he intended to address them, and accordingly “the eyes of all were fastened upon him.” When Paul and Barnabas also sat down in the synagogue of Antioch, it was regarded as an intimation that they desired to speak to the congregation, if permitted; upon which the rulers of the synagogue sent to them and gave them leave.

In addition to the one who read the Scriptures in the synagogue, and the interpreter, there were various other persons connected with its management and services. The “ruler of the synagogue” was an individual presiding over the assembly, whose office it was to maintain order and invite readers and speakers, if none voluntarily offered their services. The “elders of the synagogue” were the counsellors of the ruler, and were chosen from the most learned and powerful of the people. There were also “collectors of alms,” answering to the

“deacons” in the congregational churches of modern times; and “servants of the synagogue,” who reached the book of the law to the person appointed to read it, and returned it to its place.

But the synagogue was not only set apart for divine service; it was used for holding courts of justice, especially upon ecclesiastical affairs; and frequently corporal punishment was inflicted upon offenders while the court was sitting. Our Lord warned his disciples to “beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.”\* The apostle Paul says, that, previous to his conversion, “he beat in every synagogue them that believed in Jesus.”† To be “put out of the synagogue,” was the punishment which the Jews agreed to inflict upon them who confessed Christ; and this sentence of excommunication was executed upon the man whom he cured of his blindness.‡ This practice was very common long after the time of our Lord and his apostles. In the fourth century, Epiphanius informs us that one Joseph, a Jew with whom he was acquainted, having received a book of the gospels from a christian bishop, and being surprised by some of his countrymen while reading it, they took the book out of his hands with great violence, threw him on the ground, dragged him to the synagogue, and there beat him.§ In the seventeenth century

\* Matt. x. 17.

† Acts xxiii. 19.

‡ John ix. 22.

§ Epiph. Hæres. 30.

Uriel Acosta suffered this punishment at Amsterdam, of which he published a curious relation.

It appears to have been the common practice of our Lord to visit the synagogue of Nazareth on the sabbath-day, during his residence there : "And he came to Nazareth, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read." \* This was the general practice of his countrymen. In the twelfth year of the reign of Nero, a difference occurred between the Jews and Greeks at Cæsarea. The Jews presented a petition to Florus, their procurator : but he retired from them to Sebaste. "The next day," says Josephus, "being the *seventh day*, as the Jews were *coming to the synagogue*, a turbulent fellow of Cæsarea brought an earthen vessel, and having placed it with the bottom uppermost, sacrificed birds as the Jews were coming in. This provoked the Jews extremely, to see their laws thus insulted and the place defiled." † Not only did the Saviour read the law in the synagogue, but he frequently discoursed upon it to the congregation : "And when he was come into his own country, he *taught* them in their synagogue. — And straightway on their sabbath-day he entered into their synagogue and *taught*." ‡ That this public teaching was general among the Jews in their worship, we have the following testimony from Philo : "And from that time (Moses) to this, the Jews are wont to incul-

\* Luke iv. 17.

† Jos. De Bell. lib. ii. c. 14.

‡ Matt. xiii. 54. Mark i. 21.



cate the *principles of their religion on the seventh days*, setting apart that time to the study and contemplation of the things of nature ; for the oratories which are in every city, what are they but schools of wisdom, of fortitude, sobriety, justice, piety, and of every virtue?" \*

#### V. THE PROSEUCHÆ.

These seem to have been oratories, or slight buildings, erected in the rural districts in Judea, and in the countries where Jews resided, for the convenience of those passing by them who might be disposed to engage in religious exercises. Some have regarded them as the same with the schools or synagogues ; but the most general opinion is, that they were distinct structures. The synagogue was a roofed building, like our churches and chapels ; the proseucha is supposed to have been a simple enclosure, open at the top like our courts : the synagogues were in the cities and towns ; the proseuchæ were in the fields, by the way-side, and at the river-fords. There are a variety of passages in Philo in which these houses or places for prayer are mentioned : in his Oration against Flaccus he complains that their proseuchæ were pulled down, and that there was no place left in which they might worship God and pray for Cæsar. Juvenal, in his third Satire, thus speaks to the mendicant Jew : —

“ Ede ubi consistas : in quâ te quæro *Proseuchâ* ? ”

“ In what house of prayer may I find thee begging ? ”

\* Phil. lib. iii. De Vit. Mos.

In the gospel of Luke, our Lord is said, according to our translation, to have gone "out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." The literal rendering is, *in the prayer of God*; which most probably means an oratory, a place consecrated or appropriated to the divine service, a *proseucha*.\* In the Acts of the Apostles we are informed that Paul and his companions, coming to Philippi, went out on the sabbath-day to the "river side, where prayer was wont to be made."† The Jews, in common with all the Orientals, were accustomed to wash before prayer; and *proseuchæ* were commonly erected by the sides of rivers, because the situation was convenient for ablution: the apostles, therefore, expected to find a place of prayer on the banks of the Macedonian river; and consequently proceeded thither, calculating upon some being assembled for devout exercises, whom they might address. "And as we went *to prayer*, εἰς προσευχὴν, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us." To the former clause the article τὴν is added by many as the true reading: this fixes the sense to be, "as we went *into the proseucha*." It was not, then, as the apostles were proceeding to the act of prayer, but as they were entering the place set apart for prayer, that they encountered the Pythoness.

\* Luke vi. 12. Kypke and other critics, however, think, that because the *mountains of God*, the *hail of God*, the *trees of God*, simply mean very high mountains, great and terrible hail, very lofty trees—so, here, the *prayer of God* signifies very fervent and earnest prayer. Kypke hence translates: "he passed the night without sleep in prayers to God."

† Acts xvi. 13.

## VI. CHRISTIAN PLACES OF ASSEMBLY.

An "upper room" was the place in which the disciples were met, when they returned to Jerusalem after witnessing the ascension of their Master. That this was not one of the temple rooms, as some have strangely imagined, is evident from its being spoken of as the place where the apostles lodged—an apartment, therefore, in a private house.\* It may reasonably be supposed that in large towns and cities, where the number of Christians soon became considerable, and no one apartment was sufficiently large to contain them all, the church divided itself into different sections, each section meeting by itself in the house of one of its members. The Apostle Paul speaks of churches in the houses of particular persons: Gaius of Corinth is called the host of the church. But in the streets of the eastern cities, by the way-side, by the sea-shore, on board of ship, in the walks of philosophers, the heralds of the Cross proclaimed their doctrines, and called the attention of mankind to the solemn truths they were commissioned to publish. In an age of persecution, when power and policy combined to put down the christian faith; when the Jew in his synagogue, the priest at his altar, the Cæsar on his throne, had vowed the destruction of the obnoxious sect; the meetings of the disciples must obviously have been

\* This "upper room" has been placed by tradition in the houses of Mary the mother of John, of Nicodemus, of Simon the Leper, and of Joseph of Arimathea. Jerome says that the first christian church was erected on its site.

irregular, often by night, and always in places where detection was the least likely. And, happily, the statute-book of the church did not prescribe for them any particular place of worship: neither the hill of Sion nor the mountain of Samaria claimed from them any special religious respect: the declaration of the Saviour, "Lo I am with you always," allowed them to gather in dens and in caves of the earth, in nature's own everlasting temples, in the depth of night, when the stars were high in heaven, to adore Him who placed them in their spheres. "Where do you assemble?" said the prefect to Justin Martyr. The reply embodied the genuine christian spirit upon this point: "Where each one can and will. You believe, no doubt, that we all meet together in one place, but it is not so; for the God of the Christians is not shut up in a room, but, being invisible, he fills both heaven and earth, and is honoured every where by the faithful."

It is justly observed by Neander, that the spiritual nature of the religion of Christ, as it did not admit of any peculiar outward priesthood similar to that of Judaism, so, neither, did it prescribe the same outward kind of worship, dependent on certain places, times, and outward actions and demeanours. The apostles taught that every believer in particular, and every church in general, were to represent a spiritual temple of the Lord: the true worship of God, they declared, was to be only in the inward heart; the whole life was to be a continued spiritual service. Their primitive followers,

strongly impressed with this notion, were careful to avoid all that pomp that catches the eye, and all multiplication of those means of devotion that address themselves to the senses. They sought for no magnificent temples, no ceremonial parade: they sighed not for the "pomp and circumstance" of Judaism or of heathenism. That fundamental truth of the gospel, the leading idea of the New Testament, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," is spiritual and not carnal, had taken full possession of their minds; and hence they retired within themselves, communing with their own hearts as the temples of the Divinity. Still the communion of prayer and devotion was sought and enjoyed, whenever opportunity offered, as a source of mutual comfort and edification; but outward accommodations they held to be a matter of perfect indifference: one place was as suitable in itself to them as another; for in all places Christ could be present and active by his Spirit. Nothing in the christian worship struck the heathen so powerfully as its extreme simplicity. No stately buildings were raised, no images erected, no incense rose: on this account the charge of impiety and atheism was brought against them by their opponents, who had no idea of religion but as a mere matter of outward show. This was the reproach of Celsus, who is thus censured by Origen:—"In the highest sense, the temple and image of God are in the human nature of Christ, and hence, also, in all the faithful who are anointed by the Spirit of Christ —

living images! with which no statue of Jove by Phidias is fit to be compared.” The same charge is thus met by Minucius Felix :— “ But do you imagine we conceal our God because we have no pictures nor images to represent his person, no public temples nor altars erected to his honour? No, on the contrary : what form or image would you have us make of the Supreme Deity, when in truth man is His own likeness? What temples should we build to Him who made the world, and fills every part of it with his immensity? While we mortals live in spacious palaces, shall we confine the Majesty of Heaven to the narrow compass of a human fabric? Are not our minds fitter receptacles for his Infinity, and a consecrated heart the most agreeable altar? Consider the majesty, the goodness, and the infinite grandeur of the Almighty. He delights not in the magnificence of temples made with hands, but in the piety and devotion of a pure heart and a clear conscience. For which reason, when we sacrifice, we offer up a sincere mind, a pure soul, and holy resolutions. These are the best victims and the most acceptable offerings. He that leads the best life, and deals the most justly in the world, offers God the most grateful holocaust.” \*

The age of gold in the church was speedily succeeded by one of brass and iron. The high and glorious spiritualities of religion were lost sight of,

\* Min. Fel. Oct. c. 35.

when imperial protection and patronage were extended to the hitherto oppressed community ; ceremonies were introduced, costly fabrics erected, and a passion for imposing appearances soon annihilated the true spirit of piety. Immense sums were lavished in the time of Constantine upon the erection and adornment of churches ; but, long previous to his time, the principal cities of the empire possessed magnificent structures, occasionally, indeed, exposed to spoliation to fill the coffers of the state. But fully were such outrages repaid by similar violence, when Christianity became the religion of the empire ; the pagan temples were rifled, owing to the misguided passions of merely nominal professors ; and in some instances their decorations were transferred to ornament their own sanctuaries. The pillars of green jasper, which support the immense dome of the church of Santa Sophia in Constantinople, now a Turkish mosque, came originally from the famous temple of Diana at Ephesus, being brought from thence by the command of Justinian. Two laws were issued by Constantine ; the one prohibiting the pagan worship, and the other commanding churches to be built of a nobler size and capacity than before ; the bishops were directed to see this done within their several jurisdictions ; the governors of provinces were charged to assist them, and to supply them with whatever was required for the work ; and, in a short time, observes Eusebius, the empire was beautified with churches and ora-

tories, both in cities and villages, and in the most barbarous and desert places.\*

The cathedral church of Tyre was one of the most considerable of the ecclesiastical erections of antiquity : it was built by its bishop Paulinus, and consecrated by Eusebius. Here reposed the bones of Origen and Frederick Barbarossa : a few pillars, no longer existing, were supposed by Maundrell to mark its site. In the farewell sermon of Gregory Nazianzen, when he resigned the see of Constantinople, A.D. 381, he refers, in his usually inflated style, to the churches of the city : "Farewell, O my Anastasia! † thou, whose very name bespeaks thy piety ; who didst wake to life the doctrine so long despised ! farewell, thou seat of common victory ; thou Shiloh, where we first deposited the ark, which through forty years had wandered in the

\* The following letter of Basil, A.D. 370, has been preserved among his works :—

"Basil to Arcadius Bishop.

"I gave thanks to Almighty God on receiving your holiness's letter. It is my prayer I may not disappoint the expectations you and your brethren have formed of me, and that you may receive a full return for the honour which you have done me in the Lord's name. It gave me exceeding joy to hear of your undertaking a business so worthy of Christians as that of raising a house to the glory of Christ. Doubtless you have a sincere love for what Scripture calls 'the place where his honour dwelleth,' and so are preparing for yourself that heavenly habitation which is reserved in rest for those who love Christ's name. Should I be able to discover any relics of Martyrs, it would be my wish to offer them to you, as my contribution towards your zealous work."

In early times, it was usual to deposit the bodies of martyrs under the high altar, in allusion to Rev. vi. 9.

† A church, which he himself named Anastasia, or the Resurrection, because the Catholic faith was there revived, after it had been oppressed forty years. In his Poems he frequently apostrophizes this church.



desert ! And thou, majestic and illustrious temple, our new inheritance,\* that derivest from the word thy present grandeur ; which, being once an Iebus, we have made an Hierusalem ! And you, ye other temples, which, second to this in beauty, adorn your respective stations, and like chains entwine the city in the bonds of peace ; which, together with my weakened state, not I, but the grace conferred upon me, hath renewed ! Farewell, O magnificent city and lover of Christ ; for I will bear witness to the truth, though thy zeal be not proportionate to thy knowledge ; and parting renders us more attached. Draw nearer to the truth ; turn at length to better counsels ; honour God more than you have been wont. A change of sentiment brings no disgrace, but perseverance in iniquity entails destruction."

The first instance, which we meet with upon good authority, of the use of paintings in places of worship, occurs at the close of the fourth century. It is mentioned in a letter from Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, to the celebrated John Chrysostom, in whose diocese the church in which he found the picture was situated. The letter is interesting, as showing that the practice was visited with reprehension by the prelate. "Coming," says he, "to

\* The Arians abounded at this time in Constantinople. They had been in possession of the churches forty years, but were driven from them by an edict of Theodosius issued on the 10th of January, 381. Nazianzen immediately proceeded to the cathedral, which he terms, in his Farewell Discourse, "a new inheritance," because previously held by the Arians.

Anablatha, a village in Palestine, and going into a church to pray, I espied a certain hanging over the door, whereon was painted the image of Christ, or of some saint; which when I looked upon, and saw the image of a man hanging up in the church, contrary to the *authority of the holy Scriptures*, I presently rent it, and advised the guardians of the church rather to make use of it as a winding sheet for some poor man's burying: whereat when they were a little troubled, and said it was but just that since I had rent that curtain I should change it, and give them another; I promised them I would, and have now sent the best I could get; and pray entreat them to accept it, and give command that for the time to come, no such curtains, being contrary to our religion, may be hung up in the church of Christ; it more becoming your place solicitously to remove whatever is offensive to and unworthy of the church of Christ, and the people committed to your charge."\*

In subsequent ages of corruption, those imposing structures were reared, which, however they may command admiration as the productions of astonishing architectural skill, were ill adapted to answer the practical purposes of devotion; but religion had then become a gorgeous and expensive outward performance, and was identified with "carnal ordinances" and "a worldly sanctuary." Such buildings as those of the church of St. Peter at Rome, and the cathedrals of our own land, seem constructed

\* Inter Opera Hieron. tom. ii. p. 161.

with a view, not to bring God near to the worshipper, but to hide Him from him ; to gratify taste, not to serve devotion ; to minister merely to mental pleasure, not to facilitate the purposes of piety. We are not of the number of those who hold the spirit of piety to be incompatible with the claims of taste. In the erection of ecclesiastical edifices, both may and ought to have a due share of consideration, that religion may not be rendered, on the one hand, repulsive to the cultivated mind ; nor, on the other, the interests of the heart be sacrificed to feed the imagination. Puritanism and her daughter Nonconformity have frequently been charged with barbarism, with Vandal rudeness, on account of the homeliness of their places of worship : plain and unsightly some of these old erections may be ; but it is unfair to infer from this a rugged and unpolished character of mind ; for the circumstances of the times, the jealousy with which the movements of the Nonconformists were watched, the fines and proscriptions under which they suffered, amply account for that poverty of appearance which characterizes their meeting-houses. Puritan as Milton was, he yet could appreciate the graceful and the noble in architecture :—

“ But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloisters pale,  
And love the high embowed roof,  
With antic pillars massy proof,  
And storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light :  
There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full-voiced quire below,

In service high, and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all heaven before mine eyes."

There have been periods when the faithful have had no sanctuaries, not even the humblest, in which to assemble; when by stealth, in the grey dawn, or beneath the moon's pale light, they have gathered upon moors and in secluded valleys, to "speak often one to another;" and "God, even our father's God," has "given them his blessing," for he "inhabits" infinity as well as "eternity," and is as present in the silence of a banished world as in the "city full."

After this brief review of places of public worship, we now advert to the nature and order of the

### SERVICES

connected with them.

"We are a body of men," says Tertullian, "united together in the same faith, the same discipline, and the same comfortable hopes of eternal life. We assemble together that we may be the more powerful in our prayers, and take heaven by storm: a violence very grateful to Almighty God! We pray for kings and all that are in authority, for success abroad and tranquillity at home; that God would prosper the Roman army, and defer the final dissolution of the universe.\* We assemble together that we may hear

\* It was a prevalent opinion in Tertullian's time, and in fact with most of the early Christians, that the time of the judgment was near.

those holy pages explained, which confirm our faith, sustain our hopes, and give us a steady assurance in the goodness and mercy of an indulgent God. We assemble together to teach and to exhort each other to further advances in religious zeal and holiness of life, and to improve in piety and virtue. We assemble together sometimes to denounce the Divine censures against reprobate and obstinate sinners, which exclude them from the society of the church here; and, if they do not repent, will infallibly draw down upon them vengeance and fiery indignation in the world to come. But here we act with the greatest caution in an affair of such great importance.”\*

To offer praise to the God of providence and grace; to make prayer for individual and national mercies; to read the Scriptures; to explain the word of Divine truth, and bring its contents home to the conscience; are the objects contemplated in public worship. The order in which these services succeed each other is a matter of indifference: as to the manner in which they are performed, the practice of the church has varied.

The ecclesiastical documents of the earliest antiquity mention the reading of the Scriptures in the public services of the church. Justin Martyr mentions the “memoirs of the apostles,” and the “writings of the prophets,” being read.† Tertullian records the same fact; and in one place he seems to intimate, that in Africa the law and the prophets

\* Apol. c. 51

† Apol. edit. Thirlby, p. 97.

were read before the epistles and gospels.\* This custom appears also to have prevailed among the Easterns; for Basil, in one of his homilies on baptism, refers to the lessons that had been read that day, which were from Isaiah, Psalms, Acts, and Matthew. The custom, however, was by no means universal. Augustine says, in one of his sermons, "We have heard the apostle, we have heard the psalm, we have heard the gospel; all the Divine lessons agree." In another sermon he remarks, "We have heard the first lesson from the apostle, then we sang a psalm, after this came the lesson from the gospel: these three lessons we will discourse upon."† The Scriptures were at first read by the officiating minister; but afterwards particular persons were set apart for the office. Hence arose the order of *readers*, an order which we find, from the writings of Cyprian, completely established at Carthage as early as the third century. This office was accounted an honourable one, and was frequently held by confessors, or those who had avowed their attachment to the gospel in the face of the greatest dangers. The emperor Julian, in his youth, was the reader in the church of Nicomedia. When a reader was ordained, the bishop was ordered by the Council of Carthage to present him with a copy of the Scriptures, saying, "Take this book, and be thou a reader of the word of God; which office if thou fulfil faithfully and profitably, thou shalt have part with those that

\* De Præscript. c. 36.

† Ser. 165, 176.

minister in the word of God."\* Previous to the reading of the Scriptures, proclamation was made to the people: the deacon cried out, *Σοφία* ! "Wisdom!"—the reader exclaimed, "Alleluia ! a Psalm of David," or, "a lesson of the apostle"—the deacon again exclaiming, "Pay attention." Proclamations of this kind were common at an early period, but, as the age of superstition crept on, they were multiplied and accompanied with many puerile ceremonies. Jerome tells us, that through all the East, the reader was preceded to the pulpit or ambon by lighted wax tapers, as a sign of rejoicing for the advent of Him who was the light of men.† In some places the bells were rung, especially before the gospel was read, that being regarded as the most sacred part of the inspired volume: this practice, I believe, now prevails among the Æthiopic Christians. "When the gospel is read," says the author of the Apostolic Constitutions, a production of the fourth century, "let all the presbyters and deacons and all the people stand in great silence." The proclamation was made, *Σοφία* ! "Wisdom—stand up—let us hear the holy gospel." In the Church of England, in the present day, the people stand while listening to this portion of the word of God; and the only exception to this rule that occurs to me, in early times, was in the case of the patriarch of Alexandria, whose privilege it was to sit.

Preaching, or the discoursing publicly upon a

\* Bingham Antiq. vol. 2. † Adv. Vigil. tom. iv. p. 284. ed Benedict.

religious topic, generally founded upon some text of Scripture, is a practice which claims a remote antiquity. In the antediluvian world Enoch prophesied; and the substance of his doctrine, as preserved by Jude, shows us that he inculcated the principal truths of natural and revealed religion. Noah was a preacher of righteousness; and both Abraham and Jacob appear to have taught in their households. Moses instructed the people under his care in the doctrines of the law; he caused them to be inscribed on pillars, to be transcribed in books, and to be taught both in public and private by word of mouth. Joshua frequently harangued the people; Solomon is expressly styled "The Preacher;" Shemaiah preached to Rehoboam and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; Azariah and Hanani preached to Asa and his army. But the ancient church had no order of preachers specially appointed by the law of Moses, and sometimes the "word of the Lord was precious," or scarce; the people only heard it incidently, and long intervals occurred in which no public teacher lifted up his voice. No places were therefore set apart by the law for its regular exposition: when a messenger was raised up, he became an itinerant, visiting the camp, the court, the school, the village, and the city, to deliver the message with which he was charged. The enunciation of the word was frequently accompanied with a symbolical action illustrative of its meaning; the speaker appeared arrayed with implements of war, or husbandry, or yokes of slavery,



or some other visible sign, adapted to the subject which he had to bring before his audience. These were held up to their view, or broke before their gaze, or otherwise employed by the preacher to explain his meaning, and impress it upon the assembly.

In the time of Ezra the public exposition of the law began to obtain regularly as a part of the religious worship of the Jews; and it is a singular fact, that after that period we have no instance of their having lapsed into idolatry, of which previously they were frequently guilty. The book of Nehemiah supplies us with an interesting account of the first preaching of this illustrious Jew. In a street or square near the water gate in Jerusalem, upwards of fifty thousand persons assembled at an early hour on the morning of the Sabbath. A wooden pulpit, in the shape of a small tower, was erected for the accommodation of the preacher: the pulpit was placed upon a scaffold, or gallery; and on the right hand six of the principal preachers were stationed, and on the left hand seven others. As Ezra ascended the pulpit and began to unroll the law, the whole of the congregation rose from their seats and stood. He then proceeded to offer up prayer and praise to the God of Israel, the people bowing their heads; and at the close of the prayer, with uplifted hands, they solemnly pronounced, "Amen! amen!" Assisted occasionally by the Levites, he then read the law distinctly, gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. The sermon produced a powerful effect

upon the people; and about noon, owing to their excessive sorrow, the governor, the preacher, and the Levites interposed to restrain it. "Go your way," said they; "eat the fat and drink the sweet; send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared." Accordingly the congregation broke up, and separated to their several habitations, rejoicing because they had understood what had been declared unto them. At this time Plato was living, teaching his vague dogmas to his disciples upon the promontory of Sunium; but how powerless and ineffective were the best of pagan orators, when compared with Ezra, the returned Jewish exile!

The Author of the christian dispensation appointed a regular succession of pastors and teachers, for the edification of the church; he visited himself the cities and hamlets of Palestine, developing his sublime doctrines; and before his decease he gave the apostles the world for their field of labour, and enjoined them to go through the length and breadth thereof, preaching the mysteries of the kingdom. During the first five centuries the Greek and Latin pulpits were filled with many who were "mighty in the Scriptures," and who brought to the declaration of Divine truth the highest endowments of genius: Augustine and Cyprian were the most distinguished preachers in the western church; Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory Nazianzen in the eastern. Their sermons were delivered extempore, and taken down by notaries; their gesticulation was sober and moderate; they were generally heard.

by the people standing. After having ascended the pulpit, the first word uttered by the preacher was, "Peace be to you," or, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all;" to which the assembly responded, "Amen," and sometimes added, "And with thy spirit."

In the primitive church, when there was a respite from persecution, the people met daily for worship, and the fathers frequently preached in the week-day services, as well as on the Sabbath. This was the practice of Origen and Augustine; the latter frequently alludes to sermons which he delivered "*heri*" and "*hesterno die*." On the Sabbath the number of services varied from one to three, as circumstances allowed. Basil generally preached twice; Augustine frequently alludes in the afternoon to his morning discourse; Chrysostom styles one of his homilies, "an exhortation to those who were ashamed to come to sermons after dinner." The Antiochian churches in his time were often filled in the afternoon; he sometimes preached to them in the evening, as he reproved on one occasion his hearers for turning their attention from him to the man who was lighting the lamps. The discourse was called by the Greeks *ὁμιλία*, a familiar discourse adapted to common people, from *ὁμιλος*, an assembly, a multitude; whence our word homily: the Latins called it *tractatus*, *disputatio*, *sermo*, *locutio*, and *concio*, according to the subject and style. The preacher generally sat, though

many departed from the practice : the African congregations stood to hear him, except the aged and infirm : the Emperor Constantine stood to hear Eusebius preach before him in his palace : at Rome, however, and throughout Italy, the people sat during the sermon, and stood during the prayer. At the commencement of his address the speaker lifted up his right hand, signifying to the audience that he expected and desired their attention : this was the common custom of the heathen orators ; and Lucan mentions it as the practice of Julius Cæsar, when about to speak to the multitude. In imitation of the pagan theatre, audible testimonies of approbation were by no means uncommon in the christian assembly : Chrysostom was often interrupted by the cry, " Thou art the thirteenth apostle ! " and Cyril's voice was drowned in the exclamation, " Orthodox ! orthodox ! "

The following specimens are given of the preaching of some of the most celebrated of the fathers.

Of Chrysostom it was said by the people, when he was about to be banished from his episcopate, " Better that the sun should not shine, than that John Chrysostom should not preach." The consul Eutropius, being hurled from the summit of power into disgrace, fled for refuge to the altar of the cathedral in Constantinople, dreading the rage of the citizens, to whom he had made himself obnoxious. The next day Chrysostom ascended the pulpit of St. Sophia, and thus commenced his oration :—

“In every period, but most especially in the present, we may exclaim, ‘Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!’ Where now are the costly insignia of the consulship, and where the blaze of torches? Where now is the enthusiasm of applause, and the festive dance, and the sumptuous banquet, and the crowded levee? Where are the crowns and canopies? Where is the tumult that echoed through the city, the acclamations which resounded in the hippodrames, and the flattery of the spectators?—all these are fled. A storm instantaneously rising hath scattered the rich foliage on the ground, presenting to our eyes the desolated tree, naked and quivering to its roots. So vehement was the blast, so infuriate the hurricane, that it threatened to tear up the roots from their proud foundation, and to rend the nerves and vitals of the tree. Where now are the fictitious friends? Where are the carousals and the feasts? Where is the swarm of parasites; the streaming goblets of exhaustless wine; the arts which administered to luxury; the worshippers of the consular authority, whose words and actions were the slaves of interest? They were the vision of a night, and the illusion of a dream; but when the day returned, they were blotted from existence: they were the flowers of the spring; but when the spring departed, they were all withered: they were a shadow, and it passed away; they were a smoke, and it was dissolved; they were bubbles of water, and they were broken; they were a spider’s web, and it was torn. Wherefore

let us proclaim this spiritual saying, incessantly repeating, ‘Vanity of vanities—all is vanity.’ This is a saying which should be inscribed on our garments, in the forum, in the houses, in the highways, on the doors, and on the thresholds; but far more should it be engraven on each man’s conscience, and be made a theme of ceaseless meditation. Since fraud, and dissimulation, and hypocrisy are by the many credited for truth, it behoves each man, on each passing day, at supper, and at dinner, and in the public meetings, to repeat unto his neighbour, and to hear his neighbour repeating unto him, ‘Vanity of vanities—all is vanity.’”

The following is the close of one of Basil’s homilies :—

“Beware, then, lest, procrastinating from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, and providing no oil to sustain thy lamp, thou should light upon a day thou never hadst expected;—a day when the means of life shall fail, when consternation shall invade thee, when an anguish that knows no comfort shall overtake thee; thy domestics despairing, the physicians despairing also;—when, gasping for thy breath, as the infuriate fever parches and consumes thy substance, thou shalt groan from the depths of thy heart, but no one will sigh responsive; thou shalt utter some half-formed ejaculation, but no one will attend; and every thing thou shalt say will be accounted words of raving. Who, in that hour, shall administer the rite of baptism? Who shall admonish the expiring sinner,

sinking in the slumber of death? Thy relations? they are overwhelmed with grief. Strangers? they take no interest in thee. Thy friends? they are unwilling to exhort thee, lest they should perturb thy dying moments. Even the physician contributes to deceive thee; and thou thyself despairest not wholly of existence, so natural is it to cling to life.

“It is night. No auxiliary is at hand—no one present who hath power to baptize thee. Thy distemper rages. Death is near: his ministers are urgent. Who is he that calls thee hence? The God whom thou hast despised. And will he listen to thine entreaties? Most undoubtedly he will: thou hast hearkened so diligently to his precepts! And will he defer the appointed hour? Most assuredly he will: thou hast made so good an use of the time allotted thee already! Let not any one deceive thee with fallacious arguments. Swift destruction will rush upon thee; and perdition will approach, ruthless as the whirlwind. The angel of despair will come, hurrying away thy polluted soul; which with inward mourning will bewail its fate, the organ of lamentation being closed for ever. Ah! how will remembrance in that moment rack thee! What spiritual groans wilt thou not send forth! Ineffectually repenting thy former counsels, when thou shalt behold the rapture of the just in the brilliant distribution of rewards, and the despair of sinners in darkness the most profound, what piteous words will not the affliction of thy soul extract from thee! Alas! I neglected

to cast off the burthen of my sins, when their abdication would have been so easy. E'en now might I have been sitting in the chorus of the angels: e'en now might I have shared the delights of heaven. O nefarious counsels! For temporary enjoyments I am excruciated for ever: for the pleasures of the flesh I am consigned unto the flames. Just is the sentence of my God. I was summoned, but I did not obey; I was instructed, but I did not attend; they entreated, and I despised them.

“Such will be the voice of thy complaint if thou shouldst be snatched away unsanctified. O man, there is no alternative! Look forward to Gehenna, or to Paradise. Do not neglect the call. Tell me not thou must excuse me for this reason, or for this; since no pretext is sufficient to excuse thee. I am unable to repress my tears when I consider that thou dost prefer the deeds of shame to the bright glories of thy God, and by adhering to thy sins dost exclude thyself from the promised blessings; when I consider that thine eyes must ne'er behold the heavenly Jerusalem—that country of the living, where night erects not her sable standard; where there is no sleep, the image of death; no luxury which administers to our infirmities; no pains, no disease, no medicine; neither forums, nor commerce, nor arts, nor wealth—the origin of evils, the foundation of wars, the root of enmity;—a country of those who truly live; who die not in consequence of transgression, but flourish through eternity.



There are myriads of angels, the assemblies of the first-born, the thrones of the apostles, the seats of the prophets, the sceptres of the patriarchs, the crowns of the martyrs, the praises of the just! Mayst thou conceive and cherish a desire to be united unto these; to be cleansed and sanctified by Jesus Christ our Lord; for he possesseth everlasting power and dominion! Amen!"

The annexed is the opening of Gregory Nazianzen's Oration on the Nativity, pronounced, according to the Benedictine Editors, at Constantinople, A.D. 380.\*

"Jesus is begotten!—laud and glorify. He descends from heaven!—go forth to meet him. He stands upon the earth!—be ye exalted to the skies. 'Let the whole earth sing unto the Lord;' or, that I may comprehend in a word all nature, 'Let the heavens exult, and the earth rejoice,' on account of Him who existed in the heavens, and then appeared upon the earth. Jesus is manifested in the flesh!—rejoice at once with joy and trembling; with trembling, by reason of thy transgression; with joy, by reason of thy hope. Who adores not Him who existed from everlasting, or glorifies not Him who through eternity shall endure?"

"Again darkness is dispersed; again is light created: Egypt again is visited with darkness; Israel again is enlightened by the fire-girt pillar.

\* In my copy of Gregory Nazianzen, which belonged to the Rev. Robert Hall, many of his Orations, and his two Invectives against the Emperor Julian, are marked as having been greatly admired by him.

Let the people who sit in the gloom of ignorance, behold the resplendent beam of knowledge. The ancient things have passed away, and lo ! all things are new. The letter recedes ; the spirit abounds. The shadows flee away, and the substance enters. The antitype of Melchisedec is come : He who had no mother in His divine generation, is without a father in His human geniture ; and the laws of nature are dissolved. It is fitting that the supernal world should receive its destined population. Christ himself commands it : and shall we oppose Him ? Clap your hands, ye nations ! for ‘ unto us a Son is born, and unto us a Child is given, whose government shall be upon his shoulder.’ Let John proclaim, ‘ Prepare ye the way of the Lord.’ I, also, will proclaim the potency of this wondrous day. The incorporeal is invested with a form — the brightness of the Word is dimmed — the invisible is beheld — the intangible is felt — the everduring is born in time — the Son of God becometh the Son of Man. ‘ Jesus Christ, to-day and yesterday the same, and throughout eternity !’ Let the Jews be scandalized ; let the Gentiles scoff ; let the heretics vexatiously dispute. Then will they believe, when they shall behold Him returning to the skies ; or, if not then, at least when they shall behold Him descending from on high, and sitting as their Judge.”

Defective as are the sermons of these eastern fathers in evangelical sentiment, and devoted too much to points of speculative theology, to the

neglect of the great truths of the gospel, we must not unsparingly condemn their inflated style, which was doubtless as acceptable to the Oriental mind as it is offensive to a cold northern intellect. Sadly did public teaching afterwards degenerate: during the dark ages, the truths of the sacred word were supplanted by mystical divinity, metaphysical reasoning, and Aristotelian categories: the lives of the saints were read, and the vulgar laugh was excited by religious pantomimes. But since the spirit of religion revived at the Reformation, preaching has been restored to its primitive dignity, and attended almost with primitive power: under the energetic ministry of such men as Whitefield and his coadjutors, the scenes of the Pentecost have been nearly realized: "faith" has come "by hearing," and "hearing by the word of God."

The important objects contemplated in the institution of public worship, render our

#### CONDUCT,

with reference to the house of God, a subject of no slight concern; for upon this our personal improvement by the institute depends.

Regular and punctual attendance is obviously our first duty. Our footsteps should be directed to the sanctuary, at the appointed seasons of worship: no trivial cause should operate to detain us from its threshold: an impression of daily and hourly need, the thought that God may have some special message to our souls, the uncertainty of another

opportunity occurring to visit his courts, should lead us to embrace every season of inquiring in his temple. The long and toilsome journey which the Jews were obliged to undertake in order to visit the temple, did not hinder them from attending there to celebrate the festivals of their religion. "From Antipatris," Josephus tells us, that "Cestius marched to Lydda, but *found no men in it*, for all the people were gone up to Jerusalem to the feast of the tabernacles."\* In our own favoured country, we can scarcely, in any corner of it, be at such a distance from the sanctuary, as to render, when in health, access to it impracticable; but this circumstance operates with too many to produce remissness in the discharge of religious duty; the waters of life flow so plenteously and come so close at hand, that their very commonness induces neglect.

To derive from the sanctuary all the benefit which its services are designed and calculated to impart, a due preparation for its engagements should be carefully sought beforehand. Attendance upon it should be prefaced by employments analogous to those it places before us; we should go from secret prayer to social worship, and by the exercises of the closet endeavour to acquire that fervent and serious frame of mind, that will render public duty delightful and improving. The direction of the prophet, "Prepare to meet thy God," though it immediately alludes to his judicial visitation to Israel, yet may properly be considered as a general directive precept,

\* De Bell. lib. ii. c. 19.

enjoining us to seek a disposition of heart suitable to all our interviews with Him "whose name is Holy." We studiously prepare to meet the great and exalted of the earth. In an interview with a sovereign there is much previous anxiety about the behaviour likely to conduce to our advantage : and surely not less solicitous, but far more so, should we be to obtain the approbation of Him "by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice." To frequent habitually the house of prayer without previous preparation, to be late before we enter its precincts, is a contumelious mode of treating the great God—a practical affront—a bringing him down not only to our own level, but far below it; for in human affairs it is reckoned a point of honour, a law of politeness, to keep an appointment with an inferior as well as with an equal. To lounge and gossip to the sanctuary, indifferent whether its services may have commenced or not, is a sight offensive to the devout worshipper, and cannot but be so to the Being whose presence is so carelessly entered : it is paying less deference and respect to the Creator than we are accustomed to do to the creature : it is the master coming to wait upon the servant, instead of the servant upon the master ; and the Lord of the temple may well say of such, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, and that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth ? Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee."\*

\* Psalm l. 16, 21.

Among the dispositions which should be carefully cherished in coming to the sanctuary, the spirit of reverence is peculiarly appropriate to the occasion. The consideration that "the Lord is in his holy temple" ought to occupy the mind; and a right apprehension of the glorious fact will check volatility and dispose to seriousness. "Reverence my sanctuary" is a Divine command. To this end, the majesty and glory of the Divine character should be recollected; the infinite distance that there is between us and the all-wise and perfect Mind should be remembered: a recognition of the important truth will then be developed in a becoming deportment, in sanctity of manner, that "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints." There will be no wandering look, no restless air, no vacant countenance, no mental dissipation; we shall "serve God acceptably," because doing it with "reverence and godly fear." When the prophet gazed in the temple upon the vision of the Divine glory, and the six-winged seraphim, he saw them reverently veiling their faces with their wings before the dazzling brightness, celebrating in alternate song the holiness of Jehovah. This is the chief glory of the Divine Being; that perfection of divinity which renders him exalted above all blessing and praise: an attribute which abashes the loftiest angelic nature, and ought to check familiarity, rebuke presumption, and promote humility in us. There are, indeed, other qualities which more vividly arrest our attention, and command our admiration; as, for instance,

power and immensity ; but this is owing to the debasement of our minds, and would not be the case if the moral sense was in a sound and healthy state. Magnificent as are the displays of the Divine omnipotence, they would not so powerfully impress us as the apprehension of infinite purity, had we a right perception of that which is most elevated in the character of intellectual beings : such displays would fade into insignificance when compared with the impression which the contemplation of moral greatness would produce. If we could ascend into heaven and mingle with the spirits of just men made perfect, we should find them indeed celebrating the power and majesty of the Divine Being ; but we should not find these the principal themes of heavenly adoration ; they are not the chief topics of angelic song ; it is the purity of the Supreme Mind—his perfect rectitude of character—his entire freedom from moral evil—his inviolable regard to virtue in his creatures, that is most constantly extolled by those who surround his throne. With what dispositions, then, should an earthly worshipper be influenced in audience with the Deity, but those which inspired the prophet's language, " Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips !"

Chrysostom tells us, that in his time " the people came to the church as into the palace of the great king, with fear and trembling." We attribute no local sanctity to our places of worship ; we invest them with no holiness of character beyond any other structures ; the Being we adore is equally present

in the peasant's cot as in the building set apart for his service; but as we come to the sanctuary as the peculiar scene of our sacred engagements, it becomes us to do so with the deepest reverence. In the same spirit, likewise, we should leave it. Too many recross its threshold as if released from a state of painful bondage: the last intonations of the preacher's voice are the most welcome sounds that fall upon their ears during the service; and hardly are these waited for before preparation to depart begins. A council held at Agde, a city in France, A.D. 506, ordered, in one of its canons, that laymen should remain in church until the blessing was pronounced. Cæsarius, bishop of Arles, who presided at this council, observing some persons going out after the devotional services were over, to avoid hearing his sermon, cried out, "What are you about, my children? Where are you going? Stay for the good of your souls—at the day of judgment it will be too late to exhort you."

The spirit of gratitude it also becomes us to cherish in all our approaches to God: feelings of ardent thankfulness and sacred joy should pervade the heart; for the very fact that he condescends to hold intercourse with us is a pledge that he is disposed to bestow upon us all good gifts. "As for me," says the Psalmist, "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy;" sensibly alive to the favours received from the Divine occupant, and to the blessings he is present there to impart.



" Praise Jehovah, all the world,  
Serve Jehovah with joy!  
Come into his presence with rejoicing,  
Confess that Jehovah is God.  
He has made us, and we are his,  
His people and the sheep of his pasture.  
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
His courts with songs of praise.  
Bless him, praise his name!  
For Jehovah is good, his mercy is everlasting,  
And his faithfulness from generation to generation."

Attention to the word read or published should mark our behaviour in the house of God: the authority of the speaker, the importance of the subject upon which he treats, should banish listlessness, and rouse the intellectual faculty to a vigorous exertion of its powers. It is the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" that we hear: the miracles wrought to confirm it, the infinite value of the blood shed to procure its blessings, together with the fact that upon its reception our eternal welfare depends, combine to illustrate its powerful claims upon our notice. When worldly cares invade, when a train of thought of a foreign and extraneous nature is suggested, there should be instantaneous resistance to the intrusion: by careful discipline, that most precious gift, the power of fixing the attention continuously upon one topic may be attained; and he who would profit by his hearing, must seek and cultivate the acquirement. The bearing which the word has upon our individual character should be carefully examined; and when

received as a message from God addressed to us personally, it will prove "an axe" laid to the root of our corruptions, a "fire" purifying us from sinful passion, and a "hammer" breaking down our obduracy and pride. That these gracious effects may be accomplished by its instrumentality, prayer for the Divine blessing upon the ministry of the truth should be made; then, though a Paul may not plant, nor an Apollos water, but one "slow of speech," and "not eloquent," the "increase" will be given; and how little matters it by whose hand the seed is dispensed, if it germinates in the heart, and brings forth its appointed fruit!

"Keep thy feet," says Solomon, "when thou goest to the house of God;" and he might have added, for the direction is equally important, "when thou *leavest* it," likewise. Much of the benefit which would accrue from the public services of religion, is lost by neglecting to follow them up with prayer and reflection. When vain and frivolous conversation, when the affairs of the world, succeed the ordinances of the sanctuary, it may be said that "then Satan cometh and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts." The seed should be diligently imbedded in our bosoms, after it has been received; it should not be left naked to the cupidity of "every unclean and hateful bird," but be carefully guarded as a treasure too valuable to be lost, too precious to suffer the slightest spoliation.

"That," observes Lactantius, the christian Cicero,

“is not true religion which is left at the church. The holy and heavenly principles enforced or exercised there, should be carefully nourished to influence the life.”

"Ahab was a king, and his treasures of gold and silver were too numerous to be counted; but possessing not the gift of prayer, he went about to seek Elias, a man who had scarce a pillow on which to rest his head, whose only garment was a squalid sheepskin."

"What prodigy is this? Inform me. Thou that inheritest mountains of gold, seekest thou the poor, the contemned Elias? 'I do,' saith he, 'for what benefit can I derive from my treasured store, while this man shutteth up the windows of heaven, and rendereth Nature's gifts unfruitful?'"

"And now, my brethren, do not we understand how much more abundantly this man was gifted than the other? As long as he continued silent, the monarch and his army were a prey to want. Oh! wondrous sight! He possessed nothing upon earth, yet his influence extended to the skies. For this reason he could bar the portals of heaven, because he had nothing upon earth. His poverty was here, his treasure there. Opening his lips alone he caused unnumbered blessings to descend. O voice commanding the springs of rain! O tongue unloosing the fetters of the cloud! O mouth distilling with the dews of heaven!"—*Chrysostom, Orat. 6. On the Incomprehensible, delivered at Antioch, against the Anomæans, A.D. 387.*

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## CHAPTER V.

### PRAYER.

“BE careful for nothing,” says the voice of Inspiration; “but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” The practice to which our attention is directed in this exhortation is essential to our spiritual well-being; for we have not within ourselves the means of supplying the pressing wants to which we are subject—we must come to the fulness of Him “who filleth all in all” to obtain the elements of present peace, and of future blessedness. Prayer was one of the first actions which marked the religious life of the apostle who gave the injunction we have cited; it was the first evidence he afforded of the change he had experienced: after he had beheld the heavenly vision which humbled him on his journey to Damascus, he was seen by Ananias in the attitude of a suppliant, breathing out the desires of his heart in earnest supplication, and the conviction was impressed upon the mind of the beholder by the sight, that he had become a convert to the faith he had persecuted—had been subdued by the power of

that gospel which he was travelling to extirpate. Precisely the same effect is produced now by the influence of Divine grace upon the human heart; the revolution of eighteen centuries has not changed in this respect the character of religion; and no sooner is an individual made acquainted with himself, his danger, and his wants, than he is found humbling himself in private at the throne of grace, visiting the footstool of a God of mercy, inquiring of Him, filling his mouth with arguments, and ordering his cause before Him. That anxiety which is felt to flee from the wrath to come—the sensibilities of the heart broken and contrite under a sense of its guilt, are expressed in this manner: by retiring from the observation of man, to seek in the presence of God relief from the oppression of a burdened conscience, and from the smart of a wounded spirit.

It is obviously of the utmost importance that we should rightly understand the nature of prayer, properly attend to its exercise, and thus secure success to a service upon the performance of which so much depends.

We observe, then, that it is not the assumption of a devotional posture, the kneeling of the knee, the prostration of the frame. An individual may throw sackcloth and ashes around him, like the distracted Ahab—he may bow his head, as the Persian saluting the rising orb of fire—he may throw himself on the earth and lie in the dust, as the Mahomedan at the sonorous voice of the muezzin—he

may kneel through the silent night, like the anchorites of the middle ages, and yet be an utter stranger to the spirit of devotion. And as prayer is not a bodily exercise, neither is it a purely mental engagement: the mind may entertain a train of correct ideas as to its existing condition, and the majesty and glory of the Great Being whom it addresses in prayer, and yet the heart be insensible to the vital importance of the sentiments which the intellect and the tongue recognise.

What, then, is prayer? It involves in it all the intercourse which a spirit penetrated with a sense of its guilt, conscious of its helplessness, and anxious for relief, holds with the mighty and eternal One who alone can take the gauge of its necessities, and furnish to them an adequate and an appropriate supply. It is an act of solemn application to God, proceeding from a sense of need, and of our own inability to supply that need. It is the offering up of the desires to God for things agreeable to his will, and adapted to our circumstances. It is the medium appointed by infinite wisdom to communicate to us temporal and spiritual blessings. It is the act of an indigent creature seeking relief at the fountain of mercy; the act of a dependent creature leaning upon the arm of God for safety and support; the act, as far as it relates to man, of a sinful creature, only successful when confidence is reposed in the atoning sacrifice and prevalent intercession of the "one Mediator between God and man."



“In fact, my brethren,” says the eloquent Massillon, “prayer is not an effort of the understanding, an arrangement of ideas, a profound inquiry into the mysteries and counsels of God; it is a simple movement of the heart; it is the groaning of a soul keenly affected in the view of its own wretchedness; it is a lively and secret feeling of our wants and our weakness, and a humble confidence in exposing them to the Lord, in order to obtain deliverance and cure. Prayer does not imply in the soul which prays, great talents, rare acquirements, an understanding more exalted and cultivated than that of other men; it implies only more faith, more compunction, and a greater desire to be delivered from our temptation and our misery.”

“Prayer,” says Mrs. More, “is a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. St. Paul represents it to include our adoration of his perfections; our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, and of our obligations for his benefits, providential and spiritual; the avowal of our entire dependence on him, and of our absolute subjection to him; the declaration of our faith in him; the expression of our devotedness to him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants and for the pardon of our offences, for succour in our distress, for a blessing on our undertakings, for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs.”

Again says the same writer:—“Prayer is the

application of want to Him who alone can relieve it; the voice of sin to Him who only can pardon it. It is the urgency of poverty, the prostration of humility, the fervency of penitence, the confidence of truth. It is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness but the feeling of it; not figures of speech but compunction of soul. It is the 'Lord save us, we perish!' of drowning Peter; the cry of faith to the ear of mercy.'" The reason why prayer has been appointed, for we cannot regard it as a purely arbitrary appointment, is nowhere expressly stated in Scripture; yet glimpses of the intention of the Divine Mind in the institute, it is easy to discover. That intention seems to be, to keep up a serious and impressive sense of his agency as the originating cause of all that is great and good, and the dependence of all creatures upon him for the elements of their daily being. The institute may not be needed by natures pure and glorified in heaven, free from sin, and subject to no infirmity; but the moral nature of man being radically depraved, he is constantly prone to forget God, to exclude him from the universe he has created, and to assign to his own ability and skill, to the agency of second causes, what is divine in its origin. Conduct like this is insulting to the Creator and injurious to the creature: it is robbing him of the glory which is his due, and which with solemn authority he claims; it is a destructive delusion to the aggressor, who, forsaking God as the "fountain of living waters" constructs "broken

cisterns which can hold no water." Prayer has, therefore, been appointed by the great Lawgiver, in mercy to us, and out of respect to his own honour: it is a monitory duty, preserving in distinct and vivid recollection the fact of his existence and providence; it is an acknowledgment of his uncontrollable agency, and of our essential dependence, his fulness, and our poverty.

The practice of prayer as a duty imperative upon us may be argued from various considerations.

The relation in which we stand to God, as the creatures whom he has made, whom his unremitting agency sustains, and his goodness blesses, illustrate its propriety. It is an act of homage justly due from us to the great Governor of all, and naturally flows from a recognition of his existence, character, and jurisdiction. But it is the express law of divine revelation: it is not by implication, by any processes of induction, that we arrive at a conviction of its obligation; it is a part of "the law and the testimony," and is announced to us in the most solemn mandatory form. That "men ought always to pray and not to faint" is the irrefragable testimony of the whole Scripture: from the earliest periods of human history, under every dispensation of religion, "Seek ye my face," the essence of prayer, has been the language of Jehovah to an apostate world. "I will yet," says he, "be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Hence the most severe threatenings are denounced upon the prayerless, as guilty of one of the worst species of

impiety: it is always referred to as a special object of Divine displeasure. "Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood: which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them? Therefore they say, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit should we have, if we should pray unto him?"\* On the contrary, sincere, fervent, humble prayer, is represented as a sacrifice in which God delights: he is rich in mercy to them that call upon his name: he hastens to be gracious to the heart panting after him. "O thou that hearest prayer!" is one of his adorable appellations; and such wonderful efficacy does he assign to prayer, that he represents all the agencies of nature as tremulous to its breath, and set in motion by its cry.

"And it shall come to pass in that day,  
I will hear, saith Jehovah,  
I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth;  
And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil;  
And they shall hear Jezreel"† (*the holy seed*).

The Divine appointment of prayer must be regarded in itself as a token for good—it implies the existence of a principle of good-will to us in the Divine Being—it supposes a gracious and placable disposition in Him before whom we are called to bow—it is a pledge of his pity and compassion—and intimates not only his readiness to receive us,

\* Job xxii. 15–17.

† Hos. ii. 22.

but his desire that we should return. The call to humble ourselves before God—to seek him in prayer—to “feel after him”—clearly demonstrates to us that he is waiting to be gracious,—that he has not appointed us unto wrath; for had this been the case, had he been determined to “plead against us with his great power,” no such duty would have been required and imposed. God would have kept himself apart from us in distant and solitary grandeur—in unsocial seclusion; but instead of this, he comes forth to meet us, and invites us to meet him: a proof that he is accessible and kindly disposed, and that, however our sins may have separated between him and us, however they may have gathered as a “thick cloud” around us, the gulf is not impassable—the cloud may be scattered and dispersed. “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,” saying:—

“Come unto me, all ye who labour and are burthened,  
And I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;  
For I am meek and lowly in heart:  
And ye shall find rest unto your souls.  
For my yoke is easy, and my burthen light.”\*

Objectors have asserted prayer to be a vain and useless engagement, on the ground of a supposed pre-determination of all things which come to pass: the Divinity having formed his plan of operation, it is argued that his chariot will roll on uninfluenced by our entreaties,—that his counsel will stand, and his pleasure be performed,—that his

\* Matt. xi. 28—30.

purposes are too firmly registered in heaven to be affected by man, either by the sound of his voice or the breath of his lip. But such a representation of the Divine government as is here indicated we wholly repudiate; facts the most unquestionable prove that the present system of things is not so fixed as to be inadmissible of the change which prayer supposes: and this statement by no means affects the Divine immutability, for the true immutability of God does not consist in his adhering to particular purposes, but in his never changing the principles of his administration. There have been many and mournful alterations in the present system, which have never entered into the plan of God; sin is an innovation which he did not wish or will; and events are constantly occurring, shaped and modified by the free agency of man, which we know are opposed to his pleasure; proving that the Divine government of the world is not entangled with such bonds, that whatever *is* might *not* have been *otherwise*. Frequently is the Divine Being represented as revoking his judgments of wrath, in answer to prayer, “repenting him of the evil” he had threatened, and “shewing mercy.” It is not inconsistent with the immutability of God to suppose his operations susceptible of change, and his mind capable of different and contrary affections towards the same creatures. “Once,” says the prophet, “thou wast angry with me”—“now thine anger is turned away:” here a change from one affection to another directly opposite is attributed

to him ; but the variation argues no change of nature, but the existence of unvarying principles of goodness, holiness, and truth.

The manner of prayer embraces the various subjects to which it has reference, and the dispositions which are necessary to its suitable performance. There is a Being to be adored—there are sins to be confessed—there are blessings to be supplicated—there are mercies to be acknowledged.

In every public and private address to the Divine Being, the great doctrine of the Christian faith should be distinctly recognised, that “no man cometh unto the Father but by Him” who offered up himself “one sacrifice for sins.” The ancient Israelite, when he prayed, turned towards the mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of the annual expiation ; and we must have respect to the “shedding of blood,” without which there would have been no throne of grace, no boldness of access. Not that the atonement disposes God to hear prayer and to answer it in mercy ; the disposition existed in his nature antecedent to, and irrespective of, the sacrifice : it is simply by it that he is enabled to manifest his benevolence to us in such a way that his justice is not invaded, nor his holiness tarnished by the display. “Christ,” says Ambrose of Milan, “is our mouth, with which we address the Father ; our eye, by which we behold him ; our hands, by which we present ourselves to him : without whose mediation neither we, nor any of all the saints, have the least intercourse with God.” He is our

“Advocate with the Father;”—“he ever liveth to make intercession for us;”—he ministers continually in the heavenly temple, offering up the prayers of saints, seconded by the silent yet effectual pleadings of his wounded humanity. There is an affecting relation in *Ælian*, the historian, which illustrates the service now performed for us by our exalted Kinsman, our great High Priest. *Æschylus* having been condemned to death by the Athenians, was about to be led forth to the place of execution. His brother *Amyntas* came into the court just as the sentence of condemnation had been pronounced. He had signalised himself greatly in the service of his country, and had lost a hand in a battle which had been chiefly gained by his prowess. On hearing the fate to which his brother was adjudged, without uttering a word, he lifted up the stump of his arm in the assembly; and the historian tells us, that “when the judges saw this mark of his sufferings, they remembered what *he* had done, and for *his* sake discharged the guilty brother whose life had been forfeited.” Thus, by the presentation of his humanity before the throne,—“a Lamb as it had been slain,”—we may conceive that the Saviour intercedes for those who “come unto God by him,” procuring the remission of that sentence of death to which they have been adjudged, grace to help them in the time of need, and mercy to overlook all those imperfections which attach themselves to the services of imperfect creatures in an imperfect state. Whether, then, we have prayer to make, or praise



to offer,—whether we have gifts to acknowledge, or benefits to request,—there must be a distinct recognition of the Saviour's mediation : we must approach the Father through the Son : we must think of the Altar when we bow before the Throne : for no prayer is heard in heaven but that which He presents, whose friendly office it is to “offer up the prayers of saints ;” no praise rises to the skies but that which harmonises with “the song of Moses and of the Lamb ;” and no traveller enters the eternal world in peace and safety, but he who “sits at the feet of Jesus” in this.

Under feelings of deep solicitude for the success of our petitions, we should engage in prayer. To an angel, ignorant of the deceitfulness of the human heart, unacquainted with the blinding influence, the perverting effect of sin, coldness and apathy in such an employment, when such mighty interests are at stake, would not only occasion surprise, but be a subject of profound perplexity. “We can imagine,” says a writer of the present day, “a subject of the great northern monarchy, sentenced, for some state offence, to banishment for life into Siberian deserts, prostrating himself before his prince with intense anxiety for pardon, overwhelmed with the bitter thought of perpetual separation from all that is dear, and the shame, and hardship, and desolation of that lingering, irreversible penalty. And should my heart be cold when I fall before the true and universal Monarch, as an offender against the state and Majesty of heaven, when the

favour which I have to entreat is that of a pardon from the righteous and uncontrollable Ruler of all worlds? What would be the intenseness of my solicitude to obtain this act of grace, and the satisfying assurance of its reality, if I could contemplate the unmixed gloom, the hopeless rigour, and unutterable ignominy of a spirit's banishment from the Father of Mercies, and from the rejoicing millions that triumph in his love?" When to the amount of positive evil to be avoided, we add the consideration of the amount of good to be obtained, nothing is so much at variance with the ordinary rules of human action, as that languor and coldness which too often characterise our devotions: nothing appears so natural as that "strong crying and tears" should mark our intercourse with God. The object which is presented immediately to our attention, is the salvation of the soul:—a blessing this, not confined to the present world, not limited to the years of mortal life, but as durable as the existence of man, as immutable as the throne of God. When ages and centuries shall have run their appointed course—when earth and all its vanities shall be forgotten—when it may require the effort of a perfected memory to recall the most momentous transactions of the present state, the soul that is saved will be rejoicing in the God of its salvation; the gift will have lost no portion of its costliness; and no period will arrive to impair its value or to jeopardize its possession. And shall my thoughts be wandering, my feelings be dormant, my powers be sluggish, when

I am pleading for such a boon, and addressing in its behalf the Lord and Master of that magnificent world in which its fulness is enjoyed?

To rouse the mind from that torpor with reference to spiritual objects, to which it is subject, and which is such a fatal impediment to the successful discharge of devotional duty, the influences of the Spirit should be carefully sought. His assistance in prayer is more frequently and expressly asserted in Scripture, than any other of his operations. We read of "supplication in the Spirit," of "praying in the Holy Ghost," and the "Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." The original word for "helpeth," *συναντιλαμβάνεται*, signifies, "I bear with another;" an image taken from one who sets his shoulders and lifts with us at the same load. In many respects does the Spirit render this friendly aid to the devout; enlightening the understanding, to show them what they need; sanctifying the heart, so that they desire what will be really good for them; and imparting that measure of spiritual strength which makes the exercise, to which the soul is naturally averse, easy and delightful. Those feelings of deep and impassioned desire which are peculiarly appropriate to the petitioner, and absolutely necessary to the success of prayer, are excited and kept alive in the mind by His agency, and the worshipper enabled to address the object of his supplications in "spirit and in truth." How important is it, then, that divine influence should be

sought in prayer ! for it is to the language of solicitude that God has the hearing ear ; and in proportion to the eagerness of the application, when it has reference to a legitimate object, is its success. Examples of pious ardour abound in Scripture. It was not in the spirit of listlessness that Jacob met the angel on the banks of the Jabbok : the interview was marked with holy resolve, with vehement desire, on the part of the patriarch. What though his companions had gone across the brook and left him alone, as it related to his fellow-men ? What though the evening wore away, and night spread her darkest veil over the beautiful hills of Gilead ? He detained his mysterious visitant until the morning dawned : he “wrestled” with the angel—a symbolic action, expressing the earnestness of his entreaties—and the struggle was not ineffectual :

“ He did with the God-man prevail.”

And the “effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” So was it with Hezekiah, when the messenger of heaven stood before him, announcing to the monarch the approaching visitation of death ; he “turned to the wall and wept sore” —“ he prayed ;” and the messenger was sent back to him with tidings of days yet to come, while the shadow retraced its course upon the sun-dial set up by one of his predecessors, as a token that his doomed life was spared. And prayer had power with God when Elijah offered it up on the summit

of Carmel, and the drought under which Israel had been pining was terminated by it. Thus also the winged legate of the skies said to Daniel, when praying for the restoration of his country, in the land of the stranger—"at the beginning of thy supplication, the commandment came forth"—the words of the exile had found acceptance before God; the petitioner asked and received, and his joy was full. Such efficacy is assigned to prayer, that Jehovah said, with reference to a culprit race, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them"—"pray not for this people for their good."

There is a very remarkable passage in the *Iliad* concerning prayer, in which its nature, office, and beneficial tendency are allegorically represented :—

" *Prayers are Jove's daughters*—wrinkled, lame, slant-eyed;  
Which, though far distant, yet with constant pace  
Follow *offence*. Offence, robust of limb,  
And treading firm the ground, outstrips them all,  
And over all the earth, before them runs  
Hurtful to man; they, following, *heal the hurt*.  
Received respectfully when they approach,  
They *yield us aid*, and listen when we pray.  
But if we slight, and with obdurate heart  
Resist them, to Saturnian Jove they cry  
Against us, supplicating, that *offence*  
May cleave to us for vengeance of the wrong.  
Thou, therefore, O Achilles! honour yield  
To Jove's own daughters, vanquished as the brave  
Have oftimes been by honour paid to thee."\*

As God is the object of prayer,—as the desire to engage in it comes from him,—as the ability to perform it aright is also his gift,—it is with singular

\* *Iliad* ix. 498—510.

propriety that the poet speaks of prayers being the daughters of Jupiter. They are "wrinkled," says one of his translators, "because the countenance of a man driven to prayer by a consciousness of guilt is sorrowful and dejected. Lame, because it is a remedy to which men recur late, and with reluctance. Slant-eyed, either because in that state of humiliation they fear to lift up their eyes to heaven, or are employed in taking a retrospect of their past misconduct." That a heathen writer should so accurately express himself upon this topic, may well excite surprise, and challenge admiration : perhaps, however, we are indebted for the passage to some lingering ray of early patriarchal light, or some stray gleam from the orb of the Jewish revelation.

From this relic of heathen wisdom, we turn to hear the great master of pulpit eloquence in the eastern church, Chrysostom, descant upon the same theme :—

"Prayer," says he, "is an all-efficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine which never is exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a haven unruffled by the storm : it is the root, the fountain, and the mother of a thousand thousand blessings. It transcends a monarch's power. Often, when a king hath been the victim of disease, when the fever hath scorched his blood, when he hath writhed on the bed of anguish, the physicians have been at hand : his life-guards, his attendants, his generals have flocked around him ; and neither the wisdom of physicians, nor the potency of medicine, nor the

presence of his friends, nor the assiduity of his servants, nor the magnificence of his palace, nor the multitude of his riches, nor any thing that was human, could charm away his pain. But when a man hath entered, beloved of heaven, and familiar with the graces of the Spirit, though he but touched his body, and offered up a prayer, he hath expelled the malady; and that which no wealth could have effected, no multitude of domestics, no skill of the physician, no pomp of royalty—that hath an individual achieved, perhaps the lowest of the indigent.”\*

“I speak not of the prayer which is cold, and feeble, and devoid of energy: I speak of that which proceeds from a mind outstretched; the child of a contrite spirit; the offspring of a soul converted: this is the prayer that mounteth to the heavens. As a stream of water, while flowing on an even soil and enjoying an unimpeded progress, is calm, and never rises above its level; but when it is depressed and imprisoned in a narrow channel, bursts forth, and overflows and dashes on high its foam: so is it with the mind. As long as it enjoys tranquillity, it flows on without emotion, and wastes its strength; but when misfortune’s hand depresses it, its energies are roused, and it sends on high the impassioned prayer. To convince you that those petitions will especially be heard, which are breathed in tribulation, I will cite the prophetic Psalmist:—‘I cried to the Lord in my affliction, and he heard me.’ Wherefore let us

\* Chrysostom seems to allude to the gifts of healing that were dispensed in answer to prayer, in the primitive church. James v. 14.

awaken the flames of conscience; let us afflict the soul with the remembrance of its sins; let us afflict it, not for the purpose of distressing it, but that we may prepare it to be heard with acceptance; that we may make it vigilant, and enable it to ascend the heavens. Nothing so soon eradicates our negligence as contrition, which steals away the heart from extraneous objects, and turns it to itself. If thus afflicted we bend in prayer, we shall feel a pre-eminent consolation. And as the gathering tempest at first obscures the canopy of heaven, but when the warring winds have discharged the showers, the face of nature is more bright, more lovely; so, likewise, our affliction darkens for a time and overwhelms us; but when, through the aid of prayer, it is exhausted in penitential tears, the soul shines forth in redoubled splendour, and the knowledge of God, unclouded as the sunbeam, illuminates the heart!"

"The potency of prayer hath subdued the strength of fire—it hath bridled the rage of lions—hushed anarchy to rest—extinguished wars—appeased the elements—expelled demons—burst the chains of death—expanded the gates of heaven—assuaged diseases—repelled frauds—rescued cities from destruction;—it has stayed the sun in its course, and arrested the progress of the thunderbolt;—in a word, it hath destroyed whatever is an enemy to man. I repeat, that I speak not of the prayer engendered by the lips, but of that which ascends from the recesses of the heart. For, as the tree whose roots are buried in the earth, though assaulted by a thou-



sand tempests, knows not to be rent asunder, and defies the storm ; so the prayer deeply implanted in the soul, and springing up from thence, ascends on high ; nor can all the incursions of unhallowed reason remove it from thence.”\*

It will be useful to us in prayer to keep in mind the following considerations—the CAPABILITIES of the great Being who is the object of our worship and trust.

“ He that cometh to God must believe that he is ;” and must not only recognise the simple fact of his existence, but invest him with that fulness of glory and excellency with which he has surrounded himself in his revelations to man. The very first communication in the Sacred Volume—“ in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”—not only brings before us the Divine existence, but places us in the presence of an agent of unbounded power, putting in action an energy, beyond all comparison, greater than any which we observe in ourselves, or in other visible agents ; greater than any which we can need for our individual safety and welfare. In other parts of the Scriptures, the veil is lifted up from the Divine potentiality, and impressive intimations are given unto us, that the vast range of the universe is pervaded by a sleepless agency, which is “ great in counsel, and mighty in working.” The single fact of creation, the creation of beings out of nothing, places the sufficiency of

\* Chry. Orat. v. On the Incomprehensible.

God in a light which overwhelms the faculties, and far exceeds the grasp of finite comprehension. There was no appearance of effort—there was no seeming collection and concentration of power—there was simple volition—“he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” The ease with which all the objects created are sustained, governed, and controled, even those elements that are the most powerful and erratic, arrays the Divine omnipotence in an aspect of singular dignity and grandeur. And with the same ease that rude matter is swayed, so are all the sentient inhabitants of the universe,—angels, and men, and evil spirits,—Michael the archangel, and Abaddon the destroyer. “He bringeth the princes to nothing”—“he setteth up one and he putteth down another”—“the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” Some of the works of man give us an impressive idea of the power of the creature; but the display fades into utter insignificance when contrasted with the power of the Creator. What, for instance, is the Colosseum, the Pyramids, the barrows of the Lydian plain, or the excavated tombs of Petra, to the “strength of the hills,” the Alps and Himalaya, or the vast basins through which the rivers run into the sea? Fleets and armies exhibit the power of man upon its grandest scale, but it is the veriest feebleness when brought in contact with the opposing power of God. Let him “blow with his wind,” as he did when the invincible Armada visited our coasts, and the mightiest arma-

ment is scattered :—let him send his “frost,” as he did in our own day in Russia, and the fountains of life are frozen up, and the chill of death is carried along the pathway of the snow and the storm,—proving to us, that it is not the exaggeration of an oriental mind, not a mere figure of speech, to say, that “all nations before him are less than nothing, and vanity.” In the address of the Creek Indians to the President of the United States on their intended removal out of Georgia, the land of their fathers, these sentiments are vigorously expressed.

“Who placed in our delicious climate those lofty mountains, and planted the stately forests which shelter our babes and game? Who sends his rain and sunshine to fertilize our lands? Who distributes the flowing rivers that lead us to the sea of the mighty waters? The Eternal and Benign Spirit that walks on the face of the deep. He has placed us here. He gave us these lands as our inheritance; and, that we might not be disturbed, he placed the whites in Europe. Offend him not: for, when it is his pleasure, his mighty power shakes the mountains, as the wind shakes the leaf. His lightning blasts the stately forest. His thunder and his storms show the dreadful power of the Great Spirit.”\*

To the dawn of Christianity upon the Indian mind, such sentiments as these must be attributed; sentiments apparently drawn from the bold and vigorous painting of the inspired writers.

\* British Press, July 28, 1825.

" The waters saw thee, O God,  
 The waters saw thee, and were afraid:  
 Yea, the deeps were affrighted.  
 The clouds poured out water :  
 The ethers sent forth a sound :  
 Yea, thine arrows went abroad.  
 The voice of thy thunder was through the expanse :  
 The lightnings illumined the globe :  
 The earth trembled and shook.  
 Thy way is in the sea,  
 And thy paths on many waters ;  
 But thy footsteps are not known."\*

" Behold, he saith to the snow, Be!  
 On earth thou falleth it.  
 To the rain—and it falleth :  
 The rains of his might."†

But the human mind appears to have been familiar with such sentiments as these with reference to the Deity, even where no opportunity had been afforded it of coming in contact with the light of Scripture. Æschylus thus speaks in his *Fragments of the "Only Potentate:"*—

" Confound not God with man, nor madly deem  
 His form is mortal, and of flesh like thine.  
 Thou knowest him not. Sometimes like fire he glows  
 In wrath severe ; sometimes as water flows :  
 In brooding darkness now his power conceals,  
 And then in brutes that mighty power reveals.  
 In clouds tempestuous we the Godhead find ;  
 He mounts the storm, and rides the winged wind ;  
 In vivid lightnings flashes from on high ;  
 In rattling thunders rends the lowering sky :  
 Fountains and rivers, seas and floods obey,  
 And ocean's deep abyss yields to his sway ;  
 The mountains tremble, and the hills sink down,  
 Crumbled to dust by the Almighty's frown."

Be it also remembered, that whatever actual displays of the Divine capability we behold around

\* Psalm lxxvii. 17—20.

† Job xxxvii. 6.

us, they *manifest to us its existence*, but do not *unfold its fulness*; they are *displays of the principle*, but not *measures of its capacity*. “Who can, by searching, find out God?” The bounds of the visible universe have been enlarged to us by the discoveries of modern philosophy—instruments of greater magnifying power than those which our fathers possessed have expanded to us, to an immeasurable extent, the circle of created existence; those nebulous appearances in the heavens, which were a mystery to the ancient eye, the improved state of science now resolves into myriads of celestial luminaries, whose light, owing to their immense distance, commingles before it reaches our gaze:—but extended as is the range of Divine operation thus thrown open to us, we are not to suppose that we have reached its bounds; the glorious and overwhelming fact commands our belief, that beyond the limit to which we have advanced, there is an expanse, filled with the monuments of creative energy, greater than that over which we now can travel. Of the visible around us we may say, with Job, “Lo, these are but parts of his ways;” a faint sketch, an indistinct outline, of the Divine working alone is exhibited:—“how little a portion is there heard of him,” literally a mere whisper is only heard—finely contrasted with the “thunder of his power, which none can understand.”

In all our intercourse with the Divine Being, these views of his potency will have a salutary influence upon us. They tend to promote humility,

because of the infinite distance between Him and us; to inspire gratitude, on account of his condescension in listening to our prayers; and to encourage hope, because he has to bestow every thing which we can possibly need, and he can give it without being impoverished. The doctrine of God's all-sufficiency gives expansion to our desires, confidence to our expectations, and invests our views of him with a mysterious, unbounded, and undefined amplitude of grandeur. He has an absolute plenitude and fulness in himself, and from himself, eternally rising out of his own perfection, from which the wants of the universe of existing creatures, and the wants of all future creations, may be supplied. This is the vast thought which Paul expresses in that phrase, of the full meaning of which we have only a feeble glimmering,—“All in All,”—“A most Godlike phrase,” as Howe observes, “in which God doth speak of himself with divine greatness and majestic sense. Here is an All in All: an all-comprehended, and an all-comprehending; one create, and the other uncreate; the former contained in the latter, and lost like a drop in the ocean in the all-comprehending, all-pervading, all-sustaining, uncreated fulness.”

We learn, therefore, the cheering truth from these considerations, that the Being whom we address in prayer “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.” We may have human friends who may wish to render us assistance when our circumstances call for it, but they have

not the means; their ability falls short of their willingness; and compelled they are to see us suffer, without being able to afford us effectual relief. But the object of our worship and dependence has infinite resources at his command; he has all agencies at his disposal; there is no form of evil so powerful but what he can rebuke—no amount of good of such magnitude but what he can with equal ease bestow. Hence that glorious ebullition of triumphant confidence on the part of the apostle, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The passage intimates, that the measure of supply will be adapted to the resources of the donor; and that these resources transcend any idea that any revelation of him to our dark and contracted minds can convey. We only know in part, and see in part. It is behind the veil, beyond the horizon of earthly and visible things that the Divine capabilities are manifested in their native majesty and inherent vastness. It is in glory, around his glorious throne, in his glorious heaven, that his riches, the energies of his mighty nature, the depths of his wisdom, intelligence, and power, are in any degree unveiled. Never, then, need the most oppressed, forsaken, and guilty spirit despair of efficient help from God, when sought in penitence, prayer, and faith: its case may be far more desperate than any that has marked the annals of human folly, but it is not beyond the range of his power to remedy: bringing “his riches in glory” to bear upon it, there will be

enough, and to spare, of help afforded : for neither angels in their sinless heaven, much less man in his sinful world, have ever witnessed the full extent of his sufficiency, the marvellous grasp of his capacity.

But in addition to the **POTENTIALITY** of God, his **UNIVERSAL PRESENCE** is a doctrine which gives peculiar facilities to every act of worship. He who made the earth upon which we tread, its attendant satellite, the planetary system, and the vast sum of worlds which travel the regions of infinite space, sustains these creations of his hand in existence by his unremitting agency ;—a fact which involves in it the glorious truths of his omniscience and omnipresence ; for where He acts, He is : and where He is, He perceives. It is, indeed, by instruments, by second causes, that the Divine Being operates ;—as in fertilizing the earth by means of the sun and rain, and sustaining man by the medium of food and rest ; but he is present in all these agencies, giving them efficiency, and making them answer their intended purpose, as much so as if he threw aside his mantle of invisibility, and displayed to our gaze “his own right hand and his holy arm.” “In him,” then, “we live, and move, and have our being :” a statement which is true of all animate and inanimate existences throughout the universe ; and which brings before us, wherever we may travel, a present God, to inspect our conduct and to hear our prayers. Some feeble glimmering of this inspiring truth was conceived by the heathen mind ; wanting, indeed, the definite and majestic



features which are given to it in the Scriptures. "God is an infinite eye," is a fine saying, attributed to Orpheus. In the autobiography of Nana Farnewis, a Mahratta nobleman, who was in the battle of Paniput, 1761, the same sentiment is expressed, a votary, as he was, of the Hindoo Paganism:—"It is He who in the plenitude of his power displays himself in every thing. He is every where present at the same moment; moving without feet; seeing without eyes; touching without hands; hearing without ears; pervading all space."\* Nobly does the Jewish king, in one of his odes, expound this truth:—"Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Wherever his imagination conducts him,—to the centre of heaven, or to the bed of hell,—he recognises an all-pervading, universal Deity: an idea which overwhelms his intellectual apprehension, and leads him to say, "It is high; I cannot attain to it."

This view of the Divine existence does not exclude the idea of a local visible manifestation of himself, which, in innumerable passages, the Scriptures teach. Though the Supreme Mind is universally diffused, yet there is a part of his wide dominion where he pre-eminently *dwells*—where there is an unveiling of his presence—and where the beatific vision is contemplated by his unfallen, redeemed, and glorified creatures. We read of a "high and holy place," where He dwells who "inhabits eternity"—

\* Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, ii. p. 96.

of a holy habitation, from which he looks down upon all the inhabitants of the earth—of a throne, upon which he sits—of a pavilion, within the folds of which his glory permanently abides. “Our Father, which art in heaven,” is the language which the Saviour teaches the devout to employ. Similar representations occur :—

“The Lord is in his holy temple;  
The Lord’s throne is in heaven.”\*  
“Our God is in the heavens;  
He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”†  
“Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven,  
And bless thy people, Israel.”‡

Yet still is the Deity as vitally present in every part of his mighty empire, as in what may be called the metropolis of his dominions, where he holds his court, and exhibits his regal state : the only difference is, that in heaven he shows himself to his worshippers—on earth he is hid by the symbols of his “eternal power and Godhead.”

What facility does this great doctrine give to prayer? Does want overtake me in any particular place, or at any given point of time? I need not travel to find Him who can supply it. I am already in His temple—not, indeed, in the “holy of holies,” but at its threshold. “My Father’s house” is around me; and though not in the state apartment, yet one of its “many mansions” I am already occupying. It was the devout exclamation of Jacob, “Surely the Lord is in this place,” when far distant from the encampment of his kindred, with the lonely wilder-

\* Psalm xl. 4.

† Psalm cxv. 3.

‡ Deut. xxvi. 15.

ness around him, gazing upon the rich canopy of an eastern sky. We may visit oceans where a sail has never been unfurled, or a vessel wafted—we may roam in deserts which have never echoed with the melody of human converse—but there is His open ear, His unclosed eye, His untiring hand—“man is distant, but God is near.”

But highly encouraging is it to the devout mind to reflect, that prayer is not an exercise, the issue of which is totally uncertain: an efficacy is assigned to it in the most emphatic manner in Scripture: the Almighty Agent, before whom we bow, has promised to hear it, and to grant its request, when it takes cognizance of things that are agreeable to his will. Such passages as the following clearly indicate this:—“While they are yet speaking I will hear”—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered”—“He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry”—“Every one that asketh receiveth.” The Jehovah of the Old Testament is frequently distinguished from the gods of the heathen by this very quality, that, whereas they are unmoved by the addresses of their votaries, He never fails to “give good things to them that ask him.” The Psalmist notices the vanity of idols in this respect, and draws from it an argument for Israel to trust in the Lord.

“ Their idols are silver and gold,  
The work of men's hands.  
They have mouths, but they speak not;  
Eyes have they, but they see not;  
They have ears, but they hear not;

Noses have they, but they smell not ;  
 They have hands, but they handle not ;  
 Feet have they, but they walk not ;  
 Neither speak they through their throat.  
 They that make them, are like unto them ;  
 So is every one that trusteth in them.  
 O, Israel, trust in the Lord !  
 He is thy help and shield !”\*

Olympian Jove was often rallied by the more clear-sighted of his partisans, for his apathy to their supplications :—

“ Audis,  
 Jupiter, hec ? nec labra moves, cum mittere vocem  
 Debueras, vel marmorens vel aheneus ? aut cur  
 In carbone tuo chasta pia thura soluta  
 Ponimus, et sectum vituli jecur, albaque porci  
 O menta ? ut video, nullum discrimen habendum est  
 Effigies inter vestras, statuamque Bathylli.”†

“Dost thou hear, O Jupiter, these things? nor move thy lips when thou oughtest to speak out, whether thou art of marble or of bronze? Or why do we put the sacred incense on thy altar from the opened paper, and the extracted liver of a calf, and the white caul of a hog? As far as I can discover, there is no difference between thy statue and that of Bathyllus.”‡

In striking contrast with the gods of silver and of gold, the workmanship of men’s hands, is the God of the Bible: “his eye is over the righteous for good, and his ear is open to their cry:” to him the heart overcharged with sorrow, the spirit oppressed with guilt, may repair, in the confident

\* Psalm cxv. 4—9.

† Juvenal, Sat. xiii. v. 113.

‡ A fiddler, whose image was placed in the temple of Juno, at Samos, by the command of Polycrates.

expectation of obtaining all needful relief. This is not a human speculation, but a Divine testimony, upon the truth of which we may safely depend. "God is not man, that he should lie"—he makes no asseveration which he does not mean to accomplish;—he enacts no law—exhibits no blessing—records no promise, for the purpose of idle parade. He has "magnified his word above all his name:" in all his revelations to man, he stands forth eminently as the God of truth. Did he say to Adam, in the scene of his revolt and crime, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return?" The statement has been fulfilled with reference to all the families of his race—the Divine faithfulness is here exhibited in striking manifestation—go where we will, travel where we may, we find death the law of all human life, and the grave the "house appointed for all living." Was it declared, when the flood of waters retired from the deluged earth, that day and night, seedtime and harvest, should not cease? We see here another impressive instance of the Divine faithfulness, still, after the lapse of forty centuries, fulfilling the appointment, making the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice, giving seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.

ALMIGHTY POWER—UNIVERSAL PRESENCE—and INFALLIBLE TRUTH, give to prayer the loftiest sanctions and the most impressive encouragements. We apply to no inadequate source, to no incompetent agent, when we apply to God. There is in the mysterious depths of his nature a capacity to

bless and to save his creatures, the energy of which no finite intellect can measure. For ages he has been feeding the inhabitants of heaven with imperishable joys : he is now upholding all things by the word of his power ; and there is not an emotion of happiness, through the wide range of the universe, but what he inspires. And what is there that the character and circumstances of man can possibly require, but what this Great Being, in the plenitude of his inconceivable energy, can do for him ? I bring, therefore, my wayward, polluted, and sinful self to Thee, “O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer !” What is dark in me, Thou canst illumine : what is wrong, Thou canst correct. “Put on strength, O arm of the Lord !” “Command deliverances !” “Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.”

“ Hear! O hear ye the clangour of his voice,  
And the peal that issueth from his mouth!  
Under the whole heavens is his flash,  
And his lightning unto the ends of the earth.  
After it pealet the voice;  
He thundereth with the voice of his majesty!

From the utmost zone issueth the whirlwind;  
And from the arctic chambers, cold,  
By the blast of God the frost congealeth,  
And the expanse of the waters, into a mirror.

He also loadeth the cloudy woof with redundancy;  
His effulgence disperseth the gloom.  
Thus revolveth he the seasons in his wisdom,  
That they may accomplish whatsoever he commandeth them,  
Over the face of the world of earth,  
Constantly in succession, whether for judgment  
Or for mercy he causeth it to take place.

Hearken to this, O Job! be still,  
And contemplate the wondrous works of God.  
Dost thou know how God ordereth these things?  
How the light giveth refulgence to his vapour?  
Dost thou know of the balancings of the clouds?  
Wonders—perfections of wisdom!

TEACH US HOW WE MAY ADDRESS HIM,  
When arrayed in robes of darkness;  
Or if brightness be about him, HOW I MAY COMMUNE;  
For, should a man then speak, he would be consumed!  
Even now we cannot look at the light  
When it is resplendent in the heavens,  
And a wind from the north hath passed along and cleaved them.  
Splendour itself is with God!  
Insufferable majesty!  
Almighty!—we cannot comprehend him!  
Surpassing in power and in judgment!”—*Job xxxvii.*

## CHAPTER VI.

### PRIVATE, SOCIAL, AND DOMESTIC PRAYER.—THE PRAYERS OF CHRIST.

“LET the words of my mouth,” said the monarch of Israel, “be acceptable in thy sight :” a request which was afterwards repeated and amplified by the followers of the Saviour :—“Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” Both petitions are founded upon the presumed importance of prayer : they betray solicitude about its proper performance : the speakers had evidently a conviction of their own inefficiency to discharge the duty acceptably, and a deep impression of the solemnity of the engagement.

In order to be instructed how to pray aright, we have precepts inculcated, directions given, and the example of the Redeemer to imitate. We have many instances of his engaging in prayer, as an act of worship, a service of devotion, enjoined upon all his followers. He did this frequently in a private manner, retiring to some place of silence and of secrecy ; and he discharged the duty publicly, for the benefit of his disciples, teaching them the



practice not only of private, but of social, religious worship.

Some excellent advices came from the lips of the great Teacher, with reference to this important part of devotion : he told his primitive followers what was likely to offend "the high and lofty One" in the exercise ; and particularly guarded them against the errors of the Pharisees, whose public services were in the highest degree offensive to him. He cautioned them against hypocrisy in prayer ; resorting to it not from a consciousness of want—not with an intention of glorifying God, or of benefiting themselves, but in order to be seen of man, and, by making the action public, procuring their esteem and applause.

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men."\*

Certain canonical hours were observed by the Jews as seasons of prayer : the Pharisees contrived that the appointed hour should overtake them in the streets, that they might be observed by the people, applauded for their regular and conscientious piety, and thus have their vain-glory gratified. All show, ostentation, and parade, are offensive to the Majesty of heaven and earth, and especially so in the employments of religion : he requires "truth in the inward parts ;" and only to that man will he

\* Mat. vi. 5.

look who is of “a humble and a contrite heart, and who trembles at his word.” Our Lord further cautioned his followers against dissipation in prayer; mixing up worldly affairs with the engagement; having the lip occupied with spiritual concerns, and the heart divided and distracted by temporal objects. To avoid this, he directed them to go in secret, to retire to the closet, to separate themselves as much as possible from noise and disturbance, to shut out every thing calculated to entice, and confine their thoughts to the abodes of mortality; that the events and passions of earth might not invade and break up the intercourse they might hold with God.

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”\*

#### SECRET PRAYER.

In the passage just quoted, retirement is expressly and strongly enjoined in this act of devotion. Though religion does not summon us to the “dark monastic cell,” and devote us to the seclusion of the cloister, yet it does call upon us to retreat occasionally from the world, and commune in privacy with God. The direction to pray in secret, is given us in the most solemn mandatory form:—“Enter into thy closet”—withdraw from company—go by thyself—be alone. The word rendered

\* Matt. vi, 6.

“closet,” *ταμειον*, means any retired, solitary place, at home or abroad, where we may escape from the intrusive multitude, avoid the observation of others, and be undisturbed by them.—“Shut thy door.” We are to keep out the world, and prevent its cares and concerns from distracting our attention: having the most important business to transact with God, we are to guard against every thing that would interrupt our intercourse and converse with him.

And why this direction—this command to withdraw from observation, and wait upon God in the silence of a banished world? The reason is to be found in the nature of the duty to be performed: piety has tears to shed, confessions to make, and bewailings to utter, which can most appropriately be poured forth before the eye and ear of God alone. . It is in secret that we can give free vent to our desires, detail minutely our personal wants, fully unveil our bosoms, with a freedom that we could not do before our most intimate acquaintances. Hereby we express our faith in the universal presence of the great Creator—we acknowledge his particular providence, as taking cognizance of our individual wants—we give to him the glory of being ever nigh at hand, of providing for the necessities of the universe without being negligent of the solitary creature.

Retirement is serviceable to prayer, as it prevents distraction and promotes self-knowledge. In the bustling world we are surrounded with illusions: we have not time or opportunity to examine the

springs of human action: we therefore contract much of a factitious character, and too often "walk in a vain show." It is necessary that we should "come out from amongst them," that we should individualize ourselves; that we should explore the secret recesses of the soul, in order to have a right apprehension of our state, and see what manner of men we are. Solitude is favourable to the acquirement of an insight into self; it renders the voice of conscience audible, which the noise and tumult of life too often drown; we think, we reflect, we "commune with our own hearts," and, seeing what we are, we learn what we ought to pray for.

Retirement is enjoined in prayer; because piety is ever hostile to ostentation, and opposed to show. Religion, like charity, "vaunteth not herself." The Saviour, the model of all that is "lovely and of good report," did not "strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." Devotion is not a matter of parade; it is a real, momentous transaction between God and ourselves, with reference to which the opinion and approbation of man is as the "small dust in the balance." Display may minister to the gratification of an evil nature, because there is pride, vain glory, and self-adulation; but piety is widely remote from such qualities, recognising the maxim, "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth."

The habit of private prayer is attended with peculiar advantages, in improving the character,

sweetening the disposition, giving calmness to the passions, and purity to the affections. We cannot be much in association with any earthly friend without imbibing some measure of his spirit, and having the mind moulded in some degree after his. A similar transforming efficacy attends intercourse with God: as the face of Moses derived an external brightness from his interview with Jehovah on Sinai, so shall we come from the closet, having caught a tinge of heavenly light and sanctity from fellowship with the Father. Nothing tends so much to raise us above anxiety about temporal things, as the regular acknowledgment of Him who giveth to the beast his food, and hears the raven's cry. Luther experienced the beneficial effects of private devotion, in the perilous circumstances in which he was placed. One of Melancthon's correspondents thus writes:—"I cannot enough describe the cheerfulness, constancy, faith, and hope of this man in these trying and vexatious times. He constantly feeds these good affections by a very diligent study of the word of God. Then, not a day passes in which he does not employ in prayer, three, at least, of his very best hours. Once I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious Lord! what spirit and what faith there is in his expressions! He petitions God with as much reverence as if he was actually in the Divine presence, and yet with as pious a hope and confidence as he would address a father and a friend. 'I know,' said he, 'thou art our Father and our God, therefore I am sure that thou

wilt bring to nought the persecutors of thy children. For shouldst thou fail to do this, thine own cause, being connected with ours, would be endangered. It is entirely thine own concern : we, by thy providence, have been compelled to take a part. Thou, therefore, wilt be our defence.' While I was listening to Luther praying in this manner at a distance, my soul seemed on fire within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, and yet with so much gravity and reverence ; and also to hear him, in the course of his prayer, insisting on the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he were sure his petitions would be granted."

Distinctly is a recompense attached to secret devotion. The "Father is in secret"—"he seeth in secret." Wherever the closet is, on sea or shore, in the valley or on the mountain, he fills and pervades the solitude. And he "will reward openly : " for "every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth." Samuel, as his name signifies, was *asked of God* ; and openly was his mother rewarded for her silent, persevering prayer, when he was given to her maternal love, and exalted to be a nation's guide. Openly, too, was Jacob rewarded, when he went from his solitary night's devotion, and was publicly received by Esau—whose enmity he had dreaded—as a friend and brother. But a more open reward will be administered to them who cry unto God day and night, when the time shall come that every man must receive according to his deeds. It will then be

acknowledged by the now scoffing world, that those who have visited the retreats of piety have pursued a wise and holy policy: they will be anointed "kings and priests for ever," and will attract the notice of the whole intelligent creation, as "princes" who have prevailed in prayer. The "book of remembrance," which the great Judge of human action will then have before him, will contain a record of every act of devotion unknown to the world, and perhaps forgotten by the individual engaged in it; and every instance will be faithfully brought to light, in which, during the journey of human life, the saints have "built an altar," and "called upon the name of the Lord."

The place to which we should retire for the purpose of secret prayer, is a minor consideration; but, whenever practicable, some spot should be set apart in our dwellings for the engagement; and if no private apartment is at our command, we may walk abroad, and employ some field of nature as an oratory. The grove which Abraham planted in Beersheba, became his closet: Isaac went out into the field to meditate, or to pray, as the word in the original also signifies: Peter used the flat roof of an Eastern house for his secret devotions. The place is a matter of small importance, if it is but remote from disturbance. Whether the voice should be used in our closet exercises, or not, must be left to individual judgment and inclination: much will depend here upon constitutional temperament, and the nature of the subject which is the

ground of our petitions. If, however, the prayers of privacy are offered vocally, as low a tone as possible should be employed, that the attention of others may not be attracted, and our own also be arrested by the sound.

It is of great importance that secret prayer should be specific and personal, should take minute cognizance of our own particular case, and be the result of a microscopic view of our character and life. This is the intention of the Divine Mind in the appointment. In the social prayer-meeting, in the family circle, we are obliged to be, to a certain extent, general in our praises, confessions, and supplications: our own individual sins and mercies and wants may not be the sins, the mercies, and the wants of those associated with us in the engagement; and even if they were, it would not be always prudent to make mention of them. To solitude, therefore, we must go to unbosom ourselves before God, for with this object expressly in view, to solitude we are summoned. Distant from the world's eye and ear, supplication should assume a more specific and definite character than that which it has in the sanctuary. There should be something more than a general acknowledgment of the moral pravity of human nature, or a general application for the virtue of the atoning blood. Particular evils should be specified—the easily besetting sin should be singled out—constitutional tendencies should be noticed—and those temptations be marked with all the emphasis of a heart sensible of its weakness, to which



our station in society, or temporal calling, or domestic circumstances may expose us. This specification of our moral defects will give us a vivid impression of them, and excite deeper feelings of humiliation and holy desire, than what would be obtained from a general glance at human depravity: at the same time specific confession will lead to specific petition; and, by seeking grace against some predominant evil, some master passion, some impetuous temper, an instrumentality will be put in motion, the direct tendency of which will be to meliorate our character, and efface the blots that have deformed it.

#### SOCIAL PRAYER.

To assemble specially for the purpose of united prayer, is a practice which has obtained in the church from the earliest ages. Among the brief notices given us of the antediluvian world by the inspired historian, we find the following interesting fragment:—"Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord:" a passage which seems to intimate, that social assemblies began to be held for the purpose of prayer, perhaps under the presidency of the ancestor of our race. The existence of a Jewish prayer-meeting may perhaps be gathered from the following memorial:—"What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" The fact is indubitable with reference to the early Christians. It is recorded of the primitive disciples, that, after their Master's ascension, "they

continued with one accord in prayer and supplication:”\* of the converts on the day of Pentecost it is also stated, that “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.”† In behalf of this practice, the authority of the Saviour may be pleaded, expressed indeed in a promissory form: “If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven.”‡

The general doctrine of the efficacy of prayer has been noticed: we now proceed to remark, that this efficacy may be supposed to increase, in proportion to the number of sincere and humble worshippers. If social prayer, says one, “can be proved more acceptable, it will follow that it is more availing: and it cannot be doubted, that the Most High has always put a distinguished honour on the public congregation of his saints. ‘His goings are seen in his sanctuary.’ ‘It is the altar of God, our exceeding joy.’ Therefore David mourned in his exile, though still he retained his privilege of secret devotion, when ‘he remembered how he had gone with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.’ Jonah was not satisfied to cry unto the Lord when ‘in the belly of hell,’ but ‘looked again towards the holy temple,’ and joined his prayers to those which resounded in it. The Israelites might

\* Acts i. 14.

† Acts ii. 42.

‡ Matt. xviii. 19.

have abode in their homes, and prayed each under 'his own vine and fig tree;' but, as a nation, they must appear in Jerusalem three times in the year. Jehovah had there set his name. It was his rest. He had desired it for his habitation. Nothing is comparable with the Divine complacency in the praises and petitions of those, who, though they 'have houses,' 'come together into one place.' 'They are all present before God.' He is peculiarly made known unto them. 'It shall be said, This and that man were born there.' And this principle is elicited by all the dispensations of providence and grace toward the church: 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob!'"

If prayer, then, acquires a superior potency from the fellowship of believers, the social meeting for its exercise should be fostered by those who wish well to the cause of piety. The character of those who compose the assembly gives it a peculiar interest: they are individuals associated by the experience of "like precious faith," "brethren" dwelling "together in unity."

That assemblies were held by the primitive Christians, analogous to the prayer-meetings of the modern congregational churches, appears from various notices in the ecclesiastical writers. Under circumstances of peculiar urgency and importance they were specially convened, when calamities were to be deprecated, or particular benefits implored. An instance of this we have during the captivity of

the apostle Peter : prayer was made to God for him by the church ; and as he found them all assembled together praying, on his delivery from prison, it is not improbable that at that very time they had met together to offer up united supplication in his behalf. In seasons of drought, of pestilence, and of persecution, meetings for social prayer were commonly held. Thus Cyprian says that they continually made prayers and supplications for the repelling of enemies, for rain, for the removal or moderation of calamities. Sidonius mentions public supplications for rain and fine weather, as customary in Gaul in the fifth century ; and Basil, in a homily delivered during a season of famine and drought, complains of the non-attendance of many of his hearers to unite with him in prayer. In the time of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, and the patriarch Proclus, about the year 430, a solemn litany or supplication was celebrated at Constantinople, on account of a great earthquake.

Tertullian has the following passage to the same effect, in his Apology :—

“When ye suffer so from drought,” addressing the heathen persecutors, “that your summer is as barren as your winter, and ye fear even for the natural return of the seasons, feeding daily to the full, and running from one excess of gluttony to another, after having indulged in your baths and in your taverns, ye sacrifice offerings to Jupiter, to obtain rain ; command the people to walk barefoot in processions ; seek for heaven in the Capitol ; and

look for a supply of rain to the ceiling of your temples, forgetful alike of God and of heaven. Meanwhile, *we*, shrunk with fasting, and worn out with abstinence of every kind, cut off from all enjoyment of life, rolling in sackcloth and ashes, *weariness of heaven with the importunity of our prayers, and reach the ear of God*: and when we have thus extorted mercy, ye give honour to Jupiter, and neglect God."\*

These special meetings, called on occasions of urgency, frequently lasted upwards of three hours,—from the sixth hour in the Eastern church, or twelve o'clock, to the ninth hour, or three o'clock; and in the Western church from the third hour, or nine o'clock in the morning, to mid-day. The service consisted in reading appropriate portions of Scripture, singing hymns, and offering prayer; the latter duty devolving, as religion declined, upon the clergy, the people responding to their petitions. Basil, in the homily just referred to, observes that the people watched when the singer should conclude the verses of the psalms, that being delivered from the church, as if from a prison, they might be relieved from the necessity of praying. He speaks also in the same place of the service as a supplication and prayer, and observes that the infants who were sent instead of their parents, could not pray as was customary.† These special prayer-meetings began about the fourth century to be called *litanies*, a term which was at

\* Tert. Apol. c. 40.

† Basil, Hom. in Famem et Siccitatem.

first applied in general to all prayers, whether public or private. Thus Eusebius speaks of the emperor Constantine retiring to his tent before a battle, and there propitiating God with supplications and litanies: he also observes, that shortly before his death, Constantine entered the Church of the Martyrs at Helenopolis, and there for a long time offered supplicatory prayers and litanies to God.\*

In the fourth century, when the persecutions terminated, processional supplications came in vogue; the clergy, and the people who liked to attend, parading the streets and fields, singing anthems and chanting prayers. In the time of John Chrysostom, the Arians of Constantinople, being obliged to perform divine service outside the walls, were accustomed to assemble themselves within the gates of the city, and sing anthems and hymns suited to the Arian heresy for great part of the night. Early in the morning, singing anthems of the same kind through the middle of the city, they went out of the gates, and proceeded to the places where they celebrated their worship. The bishop of the orthodox, Chrysostom, fearing that the people might be induced by these processions to join the Arians, established them upon a greater and a more splendid scale in connexion with his own church. The liberality of the empress Eudoxia supplied the people with silver crosses, bearing wax lights, which were carried before them.† To these processional offices

\* Euseb. Vita Constantini.

† Socrates, Hist. Eccles. lib. vi.

the word Litany became peculiarly applied ; for Palladius, in his life of Chrysostom, says, that the people celebrated their litany in the fields, carrying the cross on their shoulders.\*

Processional supplications gradually spread over the eastern and western world ; and those special services, which in times of rigorous persecution had been adopted for the most pious ends, were celebrated for the purpose of mere parade and show. Mamertus, bishop of Vienne in Gaul, on occasion of several dreadful calamities, which about the year 460 fell on his people, instituted solemn litanies, or rogations as they were sometimes called, on the three days immediately preceding the feast of Ascension. These three days shortly acquired the appellation of Rogation Days, and were received throughout Gaul and England : in Spain they were not received until a later period ; and at Milan they were not celebrated before Ascension, but in the week after. In the next century, another annual litany was established in the diocese of Auvergne or Clermont, by Gallus, A.D. 545 ; who, on occasion of a plague in the city, directed an annual procession from Clermont to the church of St. Julian the Martyr. At Rome, on account of a great pestilence, A.D. 590, Gregory the Great instituted a sevenfold litany, issuing the following order : “ Let the litany of clergy depart from the Church of St. John Baptist, the litany of men from the Church of St. Marcellus,

\* Palladius, *Vita S. Joannis Chrysostomi*, p. 58.

the litany of monks from the Church of St. John and St. Paul, the litany of virgins from the Church of Casmus and Damian, the litany of married women from the Church of St. Stephen, the litany of widows from the Church of St. Vitalis, the litany of the poor and the children from the Church of St. Cecilia." These different processions were to unite in one church, where a solemn service was performed. Thus originated the *litania septena* in the Romish church, which was entitled *litania major*, and was celebrated on the twenty-fifth of March. The annual Western litanies were never adopted by the Easterns: they had annual special supplications of their own; one of which was appointed in commemoration of the great earthquake in the reign of the emperor Justinian. At the Reformation, all processional offices were abolished in this country on account of their abuse, with but one exception—the perambulation of the circuits of parishes. It was ordered by Queen Elizabeth, that “the curate and substantial men of the parish should walk about the parishes as they were accustomed, and at their return to church make their common prayers; provided that the curate, in the said common perambulations, shall inculcate this and such like sentences, ‘Cursed be he which translateth the bounds and doles of his neighbour.’”<sup>\*</sup> Thus was the special prayer-meeting of the primitive church, perhaps held in the humble habitations of the poor, or at night in some deserted

<sup>\*</sup> Injunction of Queen Elizabeth, in Bishop Sparrow’s Collection, page 73.



solitude, succeeded by splendid pageants and pompous processions, which, in our land, are now represented by the annual perambulation of a few parish officials.

If there is one institution more important than another to the spiritual prosperity of any community, it is the social meeting for prayer and praise, the neglect of which is one of the crying sins of the church in the present day. Those assemblies which are not of a strictly devotional character, are attended by numerous and eager hearers; while those which are held for the most important of all engagements, that of seeking the presence and favour of God, can only command a scanty sprinkling of visitants. Never will Zion put on her "beautiful garments," and Jerusalem "become a praise," until services of devotion are preferred by her inhabitants to their "chief joy," and to her courts they "fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows."

Chrysostom thus argues the advantage of social prayer, and rebukes the people of his charge for their neglect of it:—

"How poor," says he, "how frivolous the excuse that will be offered! Ye will tell me I can pray at home, but at home I cannot hear the homily. My friend, thou hast deceived thyself. To pray at home is possible; but to pray as in the church thou wouldst, where so many elders are assembled, where on devotion's wing ten thousand supplications ascend together,—this is not possible. Thou canst not by thyself invoke thy Lord so fervently

as when in company with the brethren. If the prayer of a private person be of such exceeding benefit, much more the supplications of a multitude. This is manifest from the words of Paul : ‘ We trust that God, who hath preserved us from so many deaths, will still preserve us while you cooperate in your petitions for us.’ It was thus that Peter escaped from prison : numerous and fervent were the prayers that were offered up. Now, if the prayer of Christians could avail so much, that it rescued from prison that pillar of the church ; how wilt thou presume to despise its potency, and what excuse wilt thou have to offer ? Listen unto God himself, who declares that a multitude with sincerity invoking him can touch, can move him. For, apologizing to Jonah, by reason of the gourd, he says, ‘ Thou hast been sparing of the gourd, for which thou sufferedst no toil, which thou didst not rear ; and shall not I spare Nineveh, that great city, in which reside more than twelve myriads of men ?’ He does not casually record their number, but that thou mayest know that the prayers of an united multitude have a wondrous influence.”

“ That such is the marvellous effect, I will evince from a circumstance in our history. About ten years ago, some persons in this city were accused of treason, as ye may well remember. One of them, a man of authority in the state, and beloved by his fellow-citizens, being found guilty of the charges which were brought against him, was led forth to execution, and dragged as a common criminal with

a rope about his neck.<sup>\*</sup> Then the whole city ran unto the Hippodrome, and drawing after them all that were in the Forum, the workshops, or the places of amusement, the collected people approached their sovereign; and, by a spectacle so moving, saved from the royal anger the culprit who had been condemned. When ye would preserve your fellow-citizen from the anger of an earthly monarch, with your wives and children ye went forth zealously; and when ye may render the Sovereign of heaven propitious, and rescue from his wrath, not one human being as then ye rescued, nor two, nor three, nor a thousand, but all the sinners inhabiting the world; can ye sit calmly without the church's precinct, and not enter, in one multitudinous body, that God, touched by the union of your hearts and feelings, may both remit their chastisement, and smile forgiveness on your transgressions?"\*

#### DOMESTIC PRAYER.

The obligation of the Christian to pray with and for his family—to assemble its members at the morning and evening sacrifice for devotional exercises—is not so much founded upon any positive enactment, as in the very nature of religion itself. It betrays an unsound state of heart to call for the written law in all cases of incumbent moral duty: it is a certain symptom of the absence of religious principle and feeling. He who sees and feels not

\* Chrysost. Orat. 5.

the obligation of family worship, only in a positive and particular precept, plainly defined in the statute-book of the church, manifests great ignorance of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, great indisposition of mind towards the duty ; and would not perform it, in such a state, in spirit and in truth, if an angel's hand were to pen the record before his gaze. If the law in this case were ever so clearly laid down, our obligation to the practice would not rest upon the injunction merely ; it is founded upon far loftier considerations : the duty is so interwoven with the spirit of piety, that the presence of the latter necessarily supposes the existence of the former. He who understands the genius of pure and undefiled religion, and feels its sacred influence, will care for his household, will sympathize with their spiritual condition, will consecrate them to the profession of the same faith with himself, that they may be partakers of his hope and joy.

This is one of those duties of religion which is sanctioned and enforced by all the affections of our being, by the most powerful sympathies of human nature. Home is endeared to us by a thousand sweet and tender associations : it is the "nest of the heart"—the centre towards which all our affections are attracted. The aged Barzillai turned to its remembrance with fondness when royal honours were offered unto him, and gave the preference to its humble satisfactions : "Let thy servant," said he to David, "I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of

my father and my mother." We see these home feelings dominant in the breast of Jacob, when an exile fearing the wrath of Esau : " So," said he, " that I come to my father's house in peace : " and we observe the same emotions surviving the passage of the grave, and existing in hell itself : " I pray thee, therefore," said one, " that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren."

The feelings developed in these passages of human history are common to our nature, and all the services of piety are in beautiful accordance with them : religion teaches them to beat with holy ardour, and to prompt to pious action : the Deity himself alludes to them, and shows that by employing them in virtuous enterprises we are but imitating his example.

" Can a woman forget her sucking child,  
That she should not have compassion  
On the son of her womb?  
Yea—they may forget—  
Yet will I not forget thee."\*

" Ye shall be borne upon her sides,  
And be dandled upon her knees;  
As one whom his mother comforteth,  
So will I comfort you :  
And ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."†

" Ephraim, my dear son :  
A pleasant child !  
Since I spoke against him,  
I do earnestly remember him still.  
My bowels are troubled for him.  
I will surely have mercy upon him,  
Saith the Lord."‡

\* Isa. xlix. 15.

† Isa. lxvi. 12, 13.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 20.

“ When Israel was a child,  
Then I loved him,       \*  
And called my son out of Egypt.—  
I taught Ephraim also to go,  
Taking them by their arms—  
I drew them with bonds of love.  
How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?  
How shall I make thee as Admah?  
Mine heart is turned within me.”\*

Piety avails itself of all the instincts and sympathies of human nature—it requires us to embark them in the cause of religion, and to make them subservient to the accomplishment of moral and spiritual purposes. We cannot, indeed, make our households religious—we cannot convert their souls and sanctify their nature—but we may adopt measures which have this object in view: we can point out to them the path of life, and warn them of the way of death—we can “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and patience”—we can so act, with reference to those associated with us in domestic life, that every facility shall be afforded them, every mean be placed within their reach, calculated to bring them to an acknowledgment of the truth. For this purpose, the regular celebration of family devotion has often been blessed of God—the child has heard from the parent’s lips the words of heavenly wisdom—the seed of truth has lain imbedded in his bosom, and, ultimately germinating, it has brought forth the fruits of holiness and of righteousness.

\* Hos. xi. 1.

The ancient heathen, in addition to their public solemnities and temple deities, had their household gods and domestic worship; a practice which doubtless originated in the family devotions of patriarchal times, a remembrance of which tradition handed down. In the early ages of the world, every pious head of a family was the ruler, priest, and instructor of his own house. "I know him," said God of Abraham, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Job, after the revelry of his children, "sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all." Joshua resolved, that both himself and his "house" should "serve the Lord;" and David, after he had conveyed the ark to the tabernacle, returned "to bless his household;" the natural interpretation of which passage is, that he collected his family together to implore for them the blessing of the God of Israel. The ancient dispensation required that every house should be solemnly set apart to God; and when the host went forth to battle, he who had built a new house, and had not dedicated it, was commanded to return to discharge the duty. These are "ensamples" left on record for our instruction; for it is the counsel given us by heaven, to "walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous." That this is the will of God concerning us, is evident, from the threatenings that are denounced against those who

neglect the duty : " Pour out thy fury upon the heathen and upon the families that call not upon thy name."

The beneficial influence of the practice pleads strongly in its behalf : from the cultivation of household piety great and incalculable advantages flow ; social enjoyments are heightened, the spirit of harmony is secured, contention is avoided, peace reigns, and family happiness abounds. The altar of piety is ever found to be the altar of peace ; it is surrounded with an atmosphere of love—the duties of husband, father, friend, and brother, are performed where it abides—the social affections exist in all their strength and tenderness—the charities of home and neighbourhood flourish—and the household which is under the fostering care of religion becomes a specimen and a sketch of the " whole family in heaven." Cecil observes of family prayer, that " it diffuses a sympathy through all its members. It calls off the mind from the deadening effects of worldly affairs. It arrests every member with a morning and evening sermon, in the midst of all the hurries and cares of life. It says, ' There is a God ! ' ' There is a spiritual world ! ' ' There is a life to come ! ' It fixes the idea of responsibility in the mind. It furnishes a tender and judicious father or master with an opportunity of gently glancing at faults where a direct admonition might be inexpedient. It enables him to relieve the weight with which subordination or service often sits on the minds of inferiors."



To the visitations of calamity—to days of evil—every household is exposed: misfortune may befall it, sickness may waste in the midst of it, and death may abridge the number of its members; but, in such circumstances, if devotion has had an altar, and religion found a tabernacle beneath its roof, it is not bereft of its “chief joy” when health vanishes or when life expires. “There is treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwellings of the wise”—the God of the families of Israel is there—upon “every dwelling-place of Mount Zion” there is “a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night”—grief is disciplined, anguish soothed, and expressions are heard to which an angel might love to listen,—“The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Often has the promise been accomplished to the letter, with reference to the inhabitants of the house of piety: “There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.” Polanus mentions a town in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, which, in the year 1584, was destroyed by an earthquake, except a part of one house, in which a man was engaged earnestly praying with his wife and children. Klopstock, in the noblest ode he ever wrote, his *Die Fruklingsfeyer*, or *the Vernal Ecstasy*, refers with nice feeling, in the last stanza, to the Divine protection which is often afforded to the tabernacles of the righteous. The poet is describing the progress of a thunder-storm in spring.

*Seht ihr den zeugen des Nahen den zückenden strahl?*

" See ye the signals of his march ?—the flash  
Wide streaming round ? The thunder of his voice  
Hear ye—Jehovah's thunder ?—The dread peal  
Hear ye, that rends the concave ?

" Lord ! God supreme !  
Compassionate and kind !  
Prais'd be thy glorious name !  
Prais'd and adored !

" How sweeps the whirlwind !—leader of the storm !  
How screams, discordant ! and with headlong waves  
Lashes the forest !—All is now repose :  
Slow sail the dark clouds—slow.

" Again new signals press—enkindled, broad,  
See ye the lightnings ?—hear ye the clouds pour  
The thunders of the Lord ?—Jehovah calls ;  
Jehovah !—and the smitten forest smokes.

" But not our cot,—  
Our heavenly Father bade  
Th' overwhelming pow'r  
Pass o'er our cot, and spare it."

It may be thought singular that, among the directions given by the Saviour to his followers for their practice, there is no positive injunction with reference to domestic prayer. Secret prayer he has expressly enjoined—social prayer is implied in the promised success with which the agreement of two shall be crowned : but upon habitual family prayer the whole of the New Testament is silent. This omission was, in all probability, designed to try men's spirits, to " prove them, and to know what is in their hearts ;" for the duty being plainly implied in the nature of religion, its neglect or performance becomes a test of the right or the unsound state of the moral feelings. No notice of the example of Christ upon this point occurs in the evangelic

history; but from his devotional habits, of which we have many instances, and the constant desire he evinced for the spiritual improvement of those around him, we may conclude that, in the families where he resided, he was a priest at the domestic altar. Under the roof of Peter at Capernaum, and that of Lazarus at Bethany, where he most frequently sojourned, the great Pattern doubtless scrupulously attended to the duties of household piety, offering up the thanksgivings and prayers of those who received him as a guest, for daily and nightly mercies.

In an attitude of devotion the Saviour is frequently placed before us; and with reference to the general duty of prayer, he has left us “an example that we should follow his steps.” We read of his praying in the company of his disciples, and sometimes apart from his followers, in privacy and in solitude. When he went to exhibit his divine glories upon the mount of transfiguration, we are told that he went up “apart to pray;” and when he went to Gethsemane on the night of his passion, he said unto Peter, James, and John, “Tarry ye here while I go and pray yonder.” He seems to have regularly attended to the duty—to have enforced by his own practice, what he so powerfully inculcated by precept—to have commenced the day, continued in its labours, and terminated its engagements, in communion with the Father. Prayer, with reference to man, is the language of inferiority, subordination, and dependence: it supposes the

being whom we address to be superior to ourselves : for “ without all doubt,” says the apostle, “ the greater is entreated of the less.” Prayer, with reference to the Saviour, was the language of his humanity, the expression of his human weaknesses and sorrows, rendered always prevalent and successful by the alliance of his humanity with Divinity. He is the Son of man as truly and properly as the Son of God : he had a body like ours, possessing the same properties, subject to the same organization, and needing the same refreshments of food and rest and sleep ; he had a soul like ours, with the same feelings and affections, subject to the same suggestions of fear, familiar with many of our sources of disquietude, and exposed to the same attacks of the powers of darkness. By the union of humanity and divinity, he was prepared and qualified for all the duties of his mediatorial character : in his humanity he suffered, the divinity giving to his suffering its infinite atoning virtue ; in his humanity he prayed, and now intercedes, the divinity giving to his prayers and intercessions all their power and effect.

We may notice, then, for our direction in prayer, a few of the recorded petitions of the Saviour.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

The beautiful and well-known petition to which this title is given, was composed by the Saviour for the benefit of his immediate disciples, both as a form to be used, a direction to be followed, and a sketch to

be filled up, as their own circumstances and future revelations of truth might render necessary. Its tenor is in strict keeping with the imperfect dispensation during which it was delivered: the peculiarities of the gospel have no distinct notice in it: the veil was not taken away when it came from the Saviour's lips; and therefore he adapted it to that state of defective light and knowledge upon religious subjects which then existed. No allusion is made in it to the Trinity in Unity, the atonement, the work of the Holy Ghost, or to any doctrine, duty, and privilege peculiar to the gospel dispensation. It is also incomplete in another respect: the christian worshipper is directed to "ask" in the name of Christ, but none of the petitions in this prayer are thus presented. The Jewish aspect of the prayer, if we may so speak, is a powerful argument against the supposition that our Lord designed it to be used as an invariable form in after ages. In fact, no instance can be brought of its being used by the apostles, or of its being common in the church, until the era of religious deterioration had commenced. "It is in the highest degree improbable," says Mr. Conder, "that this formula, had it been designed for the perpetual use of the church of Christ, should not, in any one instance, have been subsequently introduced or adverted to throughout the New Testament. The Acts and the Epistles present us with several specimens of prayer; but never does a hint occur as to the use of any formula, much less as to the obligation of an adherence to

prescribed forms." Our Lord is supposed to have selected from certain forms of prayer then used by the Jews ; and one writer gives the whole prayer in its Jewish dress, as follows :—

" Our Father who art in heaven, be gracious unto us ! O Lord our God, hallowed be thy name ; and let the remembrance of Thee be glorified in heaven above, and in the earth here below ! Let thy kingdom reign over us now, and for ever ! The holy men of old said, Remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done against me ! And lead us not into the hands of temptation, but deliver us from the evil thing ! For thine is the kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory for ever and for evermore !"\*

We object not to an enlightened use of the Lord's prayer, either in public or in private exercises : it is to the notion that its author designed to impose it upon the church through all succeeding times, and to that superstitious reverence which the prominence given to it by the Romish and Protestant hierarchy has originated, that we strongly object. The words by which it is prefaced, *after this manner pray ye*, intimate that what follows must be taken as a directory after which the disciples were to frame their supplications, until the entire abolition of Judaism, and the complete establishment of the gospel. It was when the baptismal water was identified with a regenerating

\* Gregory's Works, 4to. 1671, p. 162.

process, and the ordinance of the Supper was exalted into a saving institute, that superstition invested this prayer with a talismanic influence, and imposed its repetition upon the devotee as a spell of potent and unfailing virtue.

The prayer commences with an address to the Divine Being under a paternal character, exhibiting in heaven the full effulgence of his infinite majesty: *Our Father*—an appellation which may be regarded as expressive of that universal relation which subsists between God and his intellectual creatures in this world, or a particular relation which he bears to the family of the faithful. “As soon,” says Chrysostom, “as thou hast uttered the words, *Our Father*, thy soul is excited and elevated. Thou seest that thou hast a Father in heaven. Do nothing, say nothing, which is low and earthly. He has put thee in the rank of celestial beings; he has placed thee in their company. Why dost thou degrade thyself?” *Hallowed be thy name*.—The concern which a devout heart will feel for the glory of God is here expressed; it will desire his exaltation, his being held by all rational creatures in the highest regard and reverence; and prefer to the advancement of personal ease the promotion of his honour. *Thy kingdom come*.—Petitions similar to this were very common among the Jews about the time of our Lord, by which they meant the speedy coming of Messiah: they were accustomed to say, “May God’s great name be magnified and sanctified; may he establish his kingdom, and set forth

his redemption, and hasten his Messiah, and save his people in your days and the days of the house of Israel, hastily and speedily!" That perfecting dispensation of religion, of which the Saviour is the founder and head, having arrived, its universal reception will be the evangelical interpretation now put upon the prayer. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*—Cyprian beautifully expounds this petition: "The will of God is that will which Christ performed and taught—humility in life, steadfastness in faith, modesty in speech; in deeds, justice; in works, mercy; in morals, integrity—to know not how to offer an injury, yet to be able to bear one—to maintain peace with our brethren—to delight in God with the whole heart—to love him as he is a Father, to fear him as he is a God—to prefer nothing to Christ, as he preferred nothing to us—to adhere inseparably to his love, resolutely and faithfully to stand by his cross, when his name and honour are at stake—to bear our testimony with constancy—to encounter the severest sufferings with fortitude, and to meet death itself with patience and resignation. This it is to desire to be a co-heir of Christ: this it is to perform the commandments of God: this it is to accomplish the will of the Father."\* The measure of obedience to the Divine will for which we are to pray, is that which angels render: "As in number and order," says Hooker, "they are huge, mighty, and royal armies, so likewise in perfection of obedience unto that law which the

\* Cyprian. de Orat. Dom.



Highest, whom they love, adore, and imitate, hath imposed upon them: such observants they are thereof, that our Saviour himself, being to set down the perfect idea of that which we are to pray and wish for on earth, did not teach to pray or wish for more, than only that here it might be with us as with them it is in heaven.”\*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*—The word rendered “daily bread,” ἐπιούσιον, is not found in any Greek writer previous to the Evangelists; and Origen affirms that it was formed by them. The Syriac version has *panem necessarium*, meaning that quantity sufficient to sustain life, according to Theophylact, one of the best interpreters among the Greek fathers, Ἄρτος ἐπὶ τῇ οὐσίᾳ καὶ συστάσει ἡμῶν ἀντάρκης: *bread sufficient for our substance and support.* We are taught here to be moderate in our desires with reference to earthly good, and to acknowledge our dependence upon Providence for every thing that ministers to our comfort and support. It was one of the petitions of the ancient Jews: “Lord, the necessities of thy people Israel are many, and their knowledge small, so that they know not how to disclose their necessities: let it be thy good pleasure to give to every man what sufficeth for food!” *And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*—This petition for a spiritual blessing following so immediately after one for a temporal gift, it would seem as if our Lord intended to teach his followers, that the

\* Hooker. Eccles. Pol. book i.

great object for which they should desire life, should be, to recover the Divine favour, and provide for the future and eternal welfare of their souls. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*—The request that God would not lead us into temptation, means, that he would not suffer us to be brought into circumstances of sore trial, to be “tempted above that we are able:” and hence some of the fathers have added the explicatory clause, *quam ferre non possimus*, “which we cannot bear.” If, however, in the order of Providence, peculiar difficulties and severe temptations crowd upon our path, we are very appropriately taught to pray that our heavenly Father would interpose his power and support, and rescue us from impending evil.\*

We may gather, then, from this prayer the topics which, amplified and expanded by the subsequent discoveries of revealed truth, we should introduce in our addresses to God. His name should be reverently mentioned—his perfections be hallowed or sanctified in our thoughts, affections, and by our

\* The doxology given in Matthew's Gospel, “Thine is the kingdom,” &c. there is every reason to believe, formed no part of the original prayer. It is wholly omitted by Luke. Of the five most ancient MSS. of Matthew, two are defective in that part which contains the Lord's prayer. In the other three, viz. the Codex Vaticanus, the Codex Bezae, and Barret's newly-discovered MS., the doxology is wanting: as it is also in six other MSS. of considerable authority and importance. It is wanting in the Arabic, Persian, Coptic, and Latin versions; nor is it found in any of the fathers of the first three centuries, though Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian, have written expositions of the prayer. It probably originated in the liturgies used in the Byzantine or Constantinopolitan church, in which doxologies were common: thence it might find its way into the lectionaries, or collections of portions of Scripture read in the public service: from whence it was introduced into the text of the Byzantine edition of the New Testament.

lips : what we *need* and not what we *wish* of earthly good should be sought : the pardon of sin should be devoutly supplicated, and Divine protection or support, in circumstances of peril, be fervently implored. If we bring the discoveries of the christian system to its interpretation, and offer up its petitions thus evangelically explained and illustrated, we may adopt its occasional use to advantage, and learn from it much to comfort and improve. Associating it in this way with a gospel commentary, we fully join in the propriety of Tertullian's commendation : —“ How many commands of the prophets, of the evangelists, of the apostles—how many discourses and parables, examples and precepts of the Lord—how many duties, are comprehended in the short compass of a few words ! In the term Father is contained an expression of our faith—in the mention of his name, the celebration of his glory—in that of his will, the offer of service—in that of his kingdom, the declaration of our hope : the request for daily bread is a petition for life ; we acknowledge our sins in desiring the remission of them ; and we testify our solicitude respecting temptation in imploring deliverance from it. Nor is this any matter of surprise. God alone could teach how he would be addressed in prayer. The prayer, therefore, prepared by him, and animated by his Spirit, as it proceeded from the divine lips of the Saviour, ascends to heaven by its own authority,\* pre-

\* This expression intimates the superstitious reverence in which the prayer in Tertullian's time was beginning to be held.

sending to the Father, what was taught by the Son."\*

### THE PRAYER FOR PETER.

Our Lord, when warning this bold, incautious, yet honest disciple, of a temptation that was awaiting him, uttered the following memorable words: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He foresaw that his natural impetuosity would bring him into circumstances of imminent danger, and he supplicated in his behalf that he might not fail *utterly*, as the passage should be read.† We cannot conceive that our Lord's prayer was not heard; yet Peter did fail—not, however, finally, which was the object of the Saviour's request. We have other instances of the practice of intercession in the history of the Redeemer; as when he prayed that his followers might be kept from evil, be perfected in holiness, and glorified together with him; and when on the cross he pleaded for those who were the authors of his death, that they might be forgiven. The precepts of the Saviour impressively urge the same practice upon us, and not only with reference to those with whom we are at amity, but those who "despitefully use us and persecute us."

Of this duty of piety, we have many examples in the Old Testament. Abraham pleaded for the cities of the plain, and Samuel declared to the penitent Israelites, "God forbid that I should sin

\* Tert. de Orat. § ix.

† Ἐκλείπῃ, from ἐκ, out, and λείπω, I fail; to fail utterly.

against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.”\* Under the Christian dispensation, the practice has been distinctly imposed, and was exemplified under circumstances the most difficult to depraved humanity by the protomartyr Stephen, in his last moments.† A brother who hath committed sin, is recommended by the apostle John to the prayers of his associates :‡ “intercessions” are expressly commanded by another “to be made for all men :”§ and the greatest perseverance in prayer for “all saints” is enjoined as a statute of the Christian religion.|| The conduct of Paul is thus stated :—to the Romans and Ephesians he says, “I make mention of you always in my prayers”—to the Corinthians, “I thank my God always on your behalf,” and “I pray to God that ye do no evil”—to Philemon, “I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers”—and to Timothy, “Without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.” A belief in the efficacy of intercession, implied in the procedure pointed out in these passages, is in others distinctly avowed. The apostle attributes to it the deliverance of himself and his companions in Asia, when they had “despaired even of life”—“you also helping together by prayer for us.”¶ His imprisonment at Rome he thus mentions : “I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayer.”\*\*

From the example and precepts of the Saviour,

\* 1 Sam. xii. 23.    † Acts vii. 60.    ‡ 1 John v. 16.    § 1 Tim. ii. 1.  
                                 || Eph. vi. 18.    ¶ 2 Cor. i. 8—11.    \*\* Phil. i. 19.

and from the conduct and directions of the apostles, we may gather our duty, which is, in all our addresses to God, to cultivate feelings of enlarged philanthropy and expansive benevolence, and offer prayer, not only on our own account, but in behalf of others. The church universal, and that particular section with which we may be visibly connected, have strong claims upon our regard in the season of devotional exercise: we should “pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” assured that “they shall prosper that love thee.” Our own relatives according to the flesh should be included in the comprehensive and affectionate embrace of Christian prayer, that those who are one in esteem and love, may be one in bonds of grace, and one in realms of glory. “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” was the cry of the father of the faithful: “Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee!” was the request of David: and instead of calling down fire from heaven to consume our enemies, we are “to do good to them that hate us, and bless them that curse.” This triumph over the irascible passions of our nature does Christianity achieve:—“We, who formerly,” says Justin Martyr, “delighted in adultery, now observe the strictest chastity—we, who used the charms of magic, have devoted ourselves to the true God—we, who valued money and gain above all things, do now cast what we have in common, and distribute to every man according to his necessities—we, who hated each other, and refused to associate

with those of a different tribe, now familiarly converse together, since Christ's coming, and *pray for the conversion of those who unjustly hate us.*"\* That inscription which is so common in Popish burial grounds, *Ora pro nobis, Pray for us*, will ever be present to the eye of piety with reference to a world "lying in the wicked one;" and a practical attention to it is stated to be one means of attaining pardon for transgressors,—“My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept.” Intercession as naturally springs from Christian love, as kind and gentle attentions flow from conjugal affection; and finely does Chrysostom picture the love which ought to mark the communion of saints, when noticing Paul's attachment to the Philippians.†

“It was much,” says he, “‘to have them in his heart,’ but much more when in chains; yet more when engaged ‘in the defence and confirmation of the gospel;’ for he seems to refer to the time when he was brought before his judges, and underwent the extremity of peril. Even standing *there* (he seems to say) I meditated not how I should be rescued from imminent dangers, or how escape the snares of conspiracy, but I was delighting in your love, and in converse with the absent: not length of distance, nor the crowd of cares, nor the magnitude of perils; not the fear of rulers, nor the insurrection of multitudes; not death impending, not naked swords, not the array of executioners, nor

\* Justin Martyr, Apol. ii.

† Philip. i. 7.

any other object, could sever me from the remembrance of *you*:—for nothing is more imperious, nothing more sublime, than love; it flies above all such weapons; it is loftier than the darts of the great adversary: from the topmost heaven it looks down upon them all; and as the vehemence of a mighty wind sweeps away the oppressive dust, so the force of love sweeps away the turmoil of all other passions. Thus it was with Paul. In all events he had sufficient consolation, the salvation and remembrance of those whom he loved.”\*

#### THE PRAYER OF GETHSEMANE.

After the celebration of the paschal feast, and the institution of the Supper, our Lord, we are told, went out of Jerusalem, and conducted his disciples to the Mount of Olives. It was then the shutting in of the evening. To that mountain the Saviour had frequently resorted to teach the multitudes assembled around him. Thither, however, he proceeded, at the period to which we refer, for a very different purpose,—to prepare for the “hour and power of darkness.” On the slope of the hill stood the Man of sorrows, surrounded by his scanty band of followers. Nigh at hand was the scene of his coming passion, but obscurely visible through the shades of the evening. “And he withdrew from his disciples about a stone’s cast.” They remained on the side to which they were first led, while the Master went in solitude to pray. He went to

\* Chrysost. Hom. iv.



the "garden which is called Gethsemane," to which spot, we find, that he had been "wont to retire." It had been one of his favourite retreats—probably the scene of many an hour's private devotion, or a scene of instruction to his disciples, where, under the shade of its vines and fig-trees, they had listened to his interesting parables, to his lessons of wisdom. As the night drew on, and silence began to reign in the Valley of the Kedron, interrupted only by the hum of the neighbouring city, the Saviour began to be "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and in the intensity of his agony he prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

From this affecting and interesting passage in the Redeemer's history, we learn the best preparation for the hour of trial, and the method to obtain certain support under it:—this is prayer. Relief is found in venting our griefs and unbosoming our sorrows before God, just as the anguish of the throbbing heart is eased by relating our tale of woe to an earthly friend. Prayer is the appointed medium by which direct communications of divine grace are obtained, which are "sufficient" to sustain in trial, when deliverance from it is not granted. But it is the manner of the Redeemer's application to the Father that specially claims our notice, as a directory for us in circumstances of suffering. Though he prayed that the cup might be removed from him, yet it was only "if it be possible;" "if thou be willing:" if the request

then did not comport with the Divine pleasure, he declared his readiness to drink it, in all its fulness and in all its bitterness. To bring, then, relief to us in the time of trial, prayer must ever be characterised with a spirit of resignation : we must say, “Thy will be done :” by this submission we honour the justice of God, tacitly declaring his dealings to be consistent with the principles of a righteous and holy administration ;—we confide in his wisdom, as knowing best what mode of treatment our character and circumstances require ;—we acknowledge his goodness, expressing our belief that he is chastising, not for his own pleasure, but for our profit. An affecting instance of resignation occurred, during the siege of Barcelona by the Spaniards and English in 1705, almost equal to that of the Shunamite in holy writ. “I remember,” says Captain Carleton, who relates it in his Memoirs, “I saw an old officer, having his only son with him, a fine man about twenty years of age, going into the tent to dine. Whilst they were at dinner, a shot from the bastion of St. Antonio took off the head of the son. The father immediately rose up ; first looking down upon his headless child, and then, lifting up his eyes to heaven, whilst the tears ran down his cheeks, only said, *Thy will be done*. It was a sad spectacle, and truly it affects me even now whilst I am writing.” In the exercise of such a disposition, prayer will not be made in vain ;—God will give grace to help in the time of need—he will send the Comforter—he will pour a

tide of sustaining influences into the stricken soul, with all the tenderness of a Father, and the omnipotence of a God. And when human nature has been thus aided and strengthened, it has evinced a peace, in seasons the most revolting to natural feeling, which we might have supposed could only have dwelt in an angel's bosom ;—it has appeared arrayed in celestial light—it has “taken joyfully the spoiling of its goods ;” the martyr's songs have been heard in the midst of the martyr's fire ; and consolation has abounded, fortitude risen, and joy been heightened, as suffering has increased.

“ His hand the good man fastens to the skies,  
And bids earth roll, nor feels the idle whirl.”

“ Heaven's never deaf but when man's heart is dumb.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### TIMES, POSTURES, AND FORMS OF PRAYER.

IN the sacred volume we find no express institution of any stated hours of prayer, though periods are mentioned in the biographical notices of the worthies of the ancient church, when they regularly attended to devotional exercises. It was Daniel's custom to pray and to give thanks three times a day—a custom which he would not omit, though the writing was signed, and the decree issued, which rendered it a capital offence.\* This was also the practice of David, who not only tells us how frequently, but at what particular times of the day, he engaged in religious duties:—"As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear me."† It is uncertain whether David refers to public or private prayer; probably the latter: still the Jews in general seem to have destined three hours of the day to public devotion; the third hour answered to our nine o'clock in the morning, the sixth answered to about twelve with us, and the ninth answered to our three in the

\* Dan. vi. 10—12.

† Ps. lv. 16, 17.

afternoon. The apostles Peter and John "went up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour."\* "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour."† The Levitical law enjoined two lambs to be offered daily; one in the morning at the third hour, the other in the evening at the ninth. Men should pray, according to the Rabbins—1, when the sun rises; 2, when the sun has gained the meridian; 3, when the sun has set, or passed just under the horizon. It was a rabbinical fancy, that Abraham instituted the time of morning prayer, Isaac that of noon, and Jacob that of the evening. The writer of the cxixth Psalm says, "Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments."‡ Here a definite number is put for an indefinite; an expression equivalent to saying, "I will bless the Lord at *all times*; his praise shall *continually* be in my mouth." Rabbi Solomon, however, says that it is to be interpreted literally; for they praised God twice in the morning before reading the decalogue, and once after; twice in the evening before the same reading, and twice after; making seven times. §

\* Acts iii. 1.

† Acts x. 9.

‡ Ps. cxix. 164.

§ Sevenfold acts of devotion during the day appear to have been observed by our Saxon fathers. The following directions occur in a manuscript Saxon Homily in the British Museum:—Domin. 3 in Quadrag. A. D. 971.

"Every Christian man is commanded that he always his body seven times cross with the sign of Christ's cross.

"1. First, at day break.

"2. Second time at undern tide (9 o'clock in the morning.)

"3. The third at mid-day.

"4. The

The primitive Christians had stated periods for prayer, most probably adopting the Jewish division of the day. Tertullian is the earliest writer who speaks of the *hours*, and from him it appears that the third, sixth, and ninth, were publicly announced.\* Cyprian also speaks of this division, but alleges no apostolic authority for the performance of prayer at these times; he refers only to the example of Daniel in its behalf.† When monachism began to prevail in the East, and men abandoned their secular engagements to be wholly occupied with religious concerns, a new distribution of the day for divine worship was necessary, to fill up the leisure which the recluses possessed. The monastic orders which arose in the fourth century under the auspices of Pachomius, Anthony, and Basil, in Pontus and Syria, originated the canonical hours of the Romish church. The whole day and night was divided into eight intervals, and the services performed at these hours are called by the ritual writers, *Nocturns*, *Matin Lauds*, *Prime*, *Tierce*, *Sext*, *Nones*, *Vespers*, and *Completorium*, or *Complin*. In later times the number of offices was reduced to seven: the custom of rising in the night for the purpose of worship being given up, the nocturnal service was

\* 4. The fourth time at noontide, (3 o'clock, P. M.)

† 5. The fifth time in the evening.

† 6. The sixth time at night, ere he go rest.

† 7. The seventh time at midnight. A good man would do so if he awoke."

\* Tert. de Jejuniis. c. 10.

† De Orat. Dom. p. 196. Pearsonii Lect. in Act. Apost. p. 40.

joined in practice to the matin lauds, and both were repeated at the same time early in the morning. Prime, or the first hour, followed lauds, and was first appointed as an hour of prayer in the monastery of Bethlehem, about the commencement of the fifth century. Tierce, sext, and nones, the third, sixth, and ninth hours of prayer, are mentioned in the second century ; but had no particular service until the fifth, when the monasteries of Palestine and Mesopotamia introduced public worship adapted to them. Vespers, or evensong, had a public service in the Eastern churches at the period when the compiler of the Apostolical Constitutions flourished, probably the fourth century ; and Cassian speaks of it as having obtained among the Egyptians, from the time of their founder, Mark the Evangelist. Complin, the last service of the day, was first appointed by Abbot Benedict in the sixth century. But the preceding arrangement had never the authority of a general council ; and hence the custom varied in different districts of Christendom. The churches of the Alexandrian patriarchate only held two public assemblies in the day ; and this was the rule in the Egyptian monasteries, the rest of the day being left for private and voluntary prayer and meditation. The canonical hours of the Anglo-Saxons, used by our national clergy previous to the conquest, were denominated—*Uht-sang*, the service for midnight—*Dæg-red-sang*, that for the first peep of dawn—*Prim-sang*, that for the early morning—*Undern-sang*, that for nine in the forenoon—



*Mid-dæg-sang*, that for noon—*Non-sang*, that for three in the afternoon—*Æfen-sang*, that for the evening.

The followers of Mohammed observe five hours of prayer:—in the morning before sunrise—when noon is past, and the sun begins to decline from the meridian—in the afternoon before sunset—in the evening after sunset, and before the day is shut in—after the day is shut in, and before the first watch of the night. To these Mohammedan devotees add two more; the first an hour and a half after the day is shut in, and the other at midnight: but these are regarded as voluntary services, practised in imitation of the prophet's example, and not enjoined by the Koran.

#### PRAYER BEFORE MEALS.

Prayer and praise were offered by the Jews to the Divine Being before and after their ordinary meals, thus acknowledging him as the author and the giver of every good and perfect gift. The individual who omitted this duty, who ate, drank, or used any of God's creatures without rendering him thanks, was considered as a person guilty of sacrilege. On taking bread they were accustomed to say, *Baruch atta Elohinoo, Melech, haslam, ha motse Lechem min haarets*: "Blessed be Thou, our God, King of the Universe, who bringest forth bread out of the earth!" On taking wine, *Baruch Elohinoo, Melech, haslam, Bore pereg haggephen*: "Blessed be our God, the King of the Universe, the Creator of the

fruit of the vine !” Our Lord conformed to this custom when he celebrated the last Supper : he took bread and “blessed,” or “gave thanks,” as Luke and the apostle Paul read it, probably using the above Jewish formulary. That this was his usual practice, we may gather from the united testimony of three of the Evangelists, who tell us, that when he fed the multitude in the desert, “he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them.”\* Chrysostom, in his comment upon this passage, remarks that this was “intended to teach us not to sit down to table till we had first given thanks to Him who provides us with food.”† That the apostles imitated their Lord in this respect, we may collect from the observations of Paul, who speaks of “meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”‡ We find a sentiment similar to this in Lucian’s *Timon*, a proverbial saying among the Heathens, “The gifts that are from Jove ought not to be despised.” The Mohammedans scrupulously observe this practice, saying, before and after meat: *Bismillahi Arahmani Aræaheemi*; “*In the name of God, the most merciful and compassionate.*”

\* Mark vi. 41.

† Chrys. Hom. on Matt. xiv.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 3—5.

From Tertullian and Clemens Alexandrinus, it appears that the primitive Christians constantly attended to this custom.\* Before going to dinner, some portions of the Scripture were read, and the meat being set upon the table, a blessing was solemnly begged of God as the fountain of all blessings. It is related of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, that he would never taste any meat, not so much as a fig or any other fruit, before he had first given thanks to the great Sovereign Creator.† By the sign of the cross, both meat and drink were set apart, as both Tertullian and Origen assert—a custom which superstition introduced, and which was used in the most common actions of life.‡ The following form of prayer before meals has been preserved: “Thou that givest food to all flesh, grant that we may receive this food with thy blessing: thou, Lord, hast said, that if we drink any thing that is deadly, if we call upon thy name, it shall not hurt us. Thou, therefore, who art Lord of all power and glory, turn away all evil and malignant quality from our food, and whatever pernicious influence it may have upon us.” When at dinner, hymns and psalms were sung—a practice which Clemens Alexandrinus commends, as a modest and decent way of praising God, while we are partaking of his creatures.§ Afterwards prayer was made, thanks were given to

\* Tert. Apol. iii. 39. Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. vii. p. 728.

† Sozom. Præfat. ad Hist. Eccles. p. 395.

‡ Tert. de Cor. Mil. c. iii. Orig. on Job, lib. ii. p. 36.

§ Pædag. lib. ii. c. iv. p. 165.

God for present refreshment, and the continued provision of the good things which he had promised was implored.\* The annexed passage from Tertullian, giving an account of the *agapæ*, is lengthy; but the light it throws upon the social manners of the primitive Christians will excuse its introduction.

“What wonder is it then, if, maintaining such good will toward each other, we should feast together. For, I understand, our moderate entertainments are not only accused as scenes of infamy, but censured as extravagantly expensive: whereas in truth, Diogenes might have alluded to us, when he said, ‘The people of Megara feast as if they were to die to-morrow, and build as if they were to live for ever.’ But every one sees a mote in another’s eye, sooner than a beam in his own. The whole air is soured with the gross exhalations of all your tribes, and wards, and quarters of your city, at their feasts. The *Salii* cannot sup without borrowing money to pay for the banquet. Accountants are necessary expressly to calculate the expense of the tithes and offerings made to Hercules. An especial levy of cooks is made for the *Apaturia*, or mysteries of Bacchus.† At the smoke of the supper of Serapis, firemen are called out. Yet the only complaint that is made is at the simple meal of the Christians. Our supper sufficiently shows its meaning by its very name. It is called by a term which in Greek

\* Basil. Ep. ad Greg. tom. iii. p. 46.

† The Eleusinian mysteries.

signifies love. Whatever be its cost, an expense incurred in the cause of religion is in fact a gain, since by this refreshment we assist all who are in need ; not in the manner in which parasites with you eagerly expose themselves to every kind of indignity and ill usage, which the licentiousness of the banquet may inspire, to gratify their appetite : but with the full conviction that God more especially regards the poor.

“ If the cause of our feast be honourable, consider the order of the rest of our regulations, how appropriate it is to the duties of religion. It admits nothing indecorous, nothing indecent. *We sit not down to eat until prayer to God be made, as it were, the first morsel.* We eat as much as will satisfy hunger, and drink as much as is useful for the temperate. We commit no excess, for we remember that even during the night we are to make our prayers to God. Our conversation is that of men who are conscious that the Lord hears them. After water is brought for the hands, and lights, we are invited to sing to God, according as each one can propose a subject from the holy Scriptures, or of his own composing. This is the proof in what manner we have drunk.

“ Prayer in like manner concludes the feast. Thence we depart, not to join a crowd of disturbers of the peace, nor to follow a troop of brawlers, nor to break out in any excess of wanton riot ; but to maintain the same staid and modest demeanour, as

if we were departing, not from a supper, but from a lecture."\*

Basil the Great has two homilies on "Giving Thanks," in which the following beautiful passage occurs :—

"When thou sittest down to table, offer up thy prayers. When thou partakest food, pour forth thy thanks to Him from whom that food proceeded. If thou call in the aid of wine to sustain thy drooping strength, oh ! think on Him who bade the vine to flourish, that it might cheer thy heart and alleviate thy pains. Is the hour of refreshment past ? Let not the memory of thy Benefactor pass with it. Dost thou put on thy garment ? Breathe blessings on the name of Him who gave that garment to thee. Dost thou cover thyself with thy cloak ? Love God with redoubled favour, who hath bestowed upon us raiment adapted to the wintry blast and summer heat, which tended to preserve our being and to conceal our shame. Is the day finished ? Extol the beneficence of Him who hath lighted up the sun to recreate our daily toils ; who hath bestowed upon us the gift of fire, to illuminate the darkness, and minister to the necessities of life. Let night afford thee fresh sources of adoration. When thou considerest the azure vault, with fascinating eyes surveying the pure lustre of the stars, then pour out thy soul to Nature's Lord, and adore the

\* Tert. Apol. c. xxxix.

wise Artificer of the universe, who, seated in peerless majesty on the throne of intellect, created all. When thou beholdest universal nature lapped in the bosom of repose, again adore that Being who appoints the sweet interval of rest to our harassed limbs, and, after a short cessation, repairs our strength and renews our energy.

“What remuneration shall we give unto the Lord for all the gifts which he hath bestowed upon us? From the cheerless gloom of non-existence he waked us into being: he ennobled us with understanding: he taught us arts, to promote the means of life: he commanded the prolific earth to yield its nurture: he bade the animals to own us as their lords. For us the rains descend: for us the sun diffuses his creative beams, the mountains rise, the valleys bloom; affording us a grateful habitation and a sheltering retreat. For us the rivers flow; for us the fountains murmur; the sea spreads wide its bosom to extend our commerce; the earth exhausts its precious stores; each new object presents a new enjoyment; all Nature pouring her treasures at our feet, through the bounteous grace of Him who wills that all be ours!”\*

The families of modern Christians would do well to imitate the example of the ancient church in their social festivities—acknowledging the hand that gives them day by day their daily bread—and gratefully owning that “both riches and honour

\* Basil, Hom. 2.

come of Thee." Too often is it the case that "the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands."\* But it is an apostolic rule, as well as one of the duties of natural religion, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms"—let him not be infidel and atheistic—let him not act as though his own power had provided and his own wisdom had secured the abundance with which he is surrounded—let him practically recognise, with reference to all temporal blessings, the sentiment avowed by one of the writers of the Apocrypha, respecting one of nature's most beautiful phenomena:—

"Look upon the bow, and praise Him that made it;  
Very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof;  
It compasseth the heaven with a glorious circle,  
And the hands of the Most High have bended it."†

No particular hours for the performance of prayer are specified by Divine command. The rule of the New Testament imposes it upon us as a habit of the life; not a casual exercise—not an occasional engagement, but a perpetual and regular duty. We cannot indeed be always in the act, but we are ever to be in the spirit, and ready when opportunity offers to turn our attention to spiritual duties, and elevate our minds from earth to heaven. This is the meaning of the following precepts, "Pray without ceasing"—"Continue in prayer:"—"In every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanks-

\* Isaiah v. 12.

† Eccclus. xliii. 11.



giving, make your requests known." The business of life precludes the possibility of being always in the practice here suggested; but, amid secular cares and worldly engagements, we are to maintain the spirit, so that when free and unfettered, when there is a vacant space, an hour of calm repose, whether at home or abroad, by night or by day, the interval may be improved, the soul may stretch out its wings and fly off towards God and heaven. Many beautiful instances of "redeeming the time" in the way here pointed out, might be selected from the early annals of the church. Eusebius reports of James the Just, that he was wont to go alone into the church, and kneeling upon the pavement, to pour out his prayers to God.\* Gregory Nazianzen, in his Funeral Oration for his sister Gorgonia, particularly notices her constancy in prayer. In an epitaph on his mother Nonna, who appears to have died praying in the house of God, he mentions her attention to this exercise:—

" In other duties some might act as well,  
But, oh! in fervent prayer, she did excel  
All who have bent the knee. Behold her death!  
In supplication she resigned her breath.  
Ye tears, ye sighs, and ever watchful care!  
Ye days of fasting, and ye nights of prayer!  
O sacred form of Nonna, bowed at length  
By toils that ne'er subdued thy spirit's strength!  
Her soul with joy renounced that frail abode,  
And from the temple mounted to its God."

In the patriarchal ages, and in the early periods of the Christian church, the salutation between

\* Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. c. 23, p. 63, ex Hegesippo.

friend and friend, between one acquaintance and another, generally assumed the form of prayer. "The Lord be with you!" was the language of Boaz to his reapers: "the Lord bless thee!" was their devout reply. Our analogical greeting of "God bless you!" now rapidly sinking into disuse, is a relic of this primitive custom. The verbal salutations of the Easterns are still of an emphatically devotional character, and the omission of them rarely occurs except where the parties are at open enmity. The want of these customary pious greetings is evidently alluded to by the Psalmist as an expression of great indignity: "Neither," says he, "do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord." Shakspeare says, when describing the indignity offered to a fallen monarch:—

—— "Men's eyes

Did scowl on Richard; no man cried, God save him!  
No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home,  
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head."

The address of Boaz to his reapers may not only be regarded as the customary expression of the good man's courtesy, but as a devout acknowledgment of the bounty of Providence, common at the commencement and close of harvest. Heathenism taught this practice to its votaries:

"In summer's heat,  
Before the sickles touch the rip'ning wheat,  
On Ceres call; and let the lab'ring hind  
With oaken wreaths his hollow temples bind:  
On Ceres let him call, and Ceres praise,  
With uncouth dances, and with country lays."

## POSTURES OF PRAYER.

The notion is happily now nearly extinct, that any virtue is communicated to prayer by the most humiliating posture which the body can assume in offering it; yet still the propriety of the apostle's direction cannot be questioned, that "all things," and especially devotional exercises, should "be done decently and in order." While true piety will not depend upon external decorum, it will scrupulously attend to it, and revolt from assuming such an attitude as shall betray irreverence or carelessness. The attitudes in prayer mentioned in Scripture are chiefly standing, kneeling, and falling prostrate upon the face. Abraham stood before the Lord when he interceded in behalf of the cities of the plain—the publican stood in the porch of the temple when he prayed—our Lord, on the contrary, kneeled down during his solitary prayer in Gethsemane—and the apostle Paul speaks of bowing his knees before God for his converts. Either of these attitudes may be adopted by the worshipper, according as surrounding circumstances may render it convenient; though standing seems to be the most appropriate posture for public, and kneeling for private devotion. The practice varied in the primitive church: Justin Martyr says, that the people stood in prayer: the Apostolic Constitutions speak of kneeling in the first prayer for the catechumens, and of standing in the second. Origen often closed his sermon with an exhortation to the people to "stand up and pray."

In Gaul, at a later period, kneeling was accounted the most becoming attitude, though a majority of the congregation often continued standing.\*

Some of the Fathers advocated the custom of kneeling in private and social prayer, except on the Sabbath: that being a day commemorative of the Saviour's resurrection, they stood, symbolically to represent their restoration through him. Irenæus is said to have mentioned this arrangement in his book concerning Easter: it is certain that the Nicene Council, in its twentieth canon, ordered that the people on the Lord's day should pray standing. To sit down was ever regarded as an indecent practice: "If it be," says Tertullian, "an irreverent thing to sit down before or over-against a person for whom thou hast a mighty reverence and veneration; how much more does it savour of irreligion to do so in the presence of the living God, while the angel is yet standing by thee to carry up the prayer to heaven, unless we have a mind to reproach God to his face, and tell him that we are weary of the duty."† Ever should it be recollected, that the posture of the body in prayer, however reverent and humiliating, can profit nothing unless it be accompanied with corresponding dispositions of mind. It matters not how reverently the suppliant may kneel, how devoutly he may prostrate himself, if his heart is not humbled, if his spirit is not contrite.

Repeated mention is made in Scripture of the

\* Dr. Porter's Historical Facts, &c.

† Tert. de Orat. c. xii.

lifting up of the hands towards heaven in prayer : an act expressive of the faith of the individual, that the assistance he solicited could only come from thence. When Solomon dedicated his temple by solemn acts of devotion, he *stood* before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his *hands towards heaven*,\* and commenced his sublime prayer. "Hear my voice," says the Psalmist, "when I *lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle*"†—" *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord*"‡—"Let my prayer be set forth, and the *lifting up of my hands* as the evening sacrifice."§ "I will therefore," observes the apostle, "that men pray every where, *lifting up holy hands*."|| An example of this occurs in Virgil :—

" *Sustulit exutas vinclis ad sidera palmas,  
Vos æterni ignes, et non violabile vestrum  
Testor numen, ait.*"

"Ye lamps of heaven, he said, and *lifted high  
His hands* now free; thou venerable sky,  
Inviolable powers!" ¶

The general demeanour which ought to be maintained in prayer, is thus expressed by Cyprian :—"Let our speech in prayer be under discipline, observing a decorous calmness and modesty; we are to remember that we are under the eye of God, whom we are not to offend, either in the habit of our body, or the manner of our speech; for as it is in the fashion of those that are impudent to clamour

\* 1 Kings viii. 22.

§ Psalm cxli. 2.

† Psalm xxviii. 2.

|| 1 Tim. ii. 8.

‡ Psalm cxxxiv. 2.

¶ Æn. lib. ii. v. 153.

and make a noise, so, on the contrary, it becomes a sober man to pray with a modest voice. When, therefore, we come together with our brethren into the assembly, to celebrate the Divine sacrifices with the minister of God, we ought to be mindful of order and of a reverent regard, and not to throw about our prayers with a wild and confused voice, or with a disorderly prattling to cast forth those petitions which ought with the greatest modesty to be put up to God."\*

#### PRAYING TOWARDS THE EAST.

This custom was very early introduced into the church, and was so universal that there is scarcely one ecclesiastical writer but speaks of it, though different reasons are assigned for the practice. Basil, who traces it up to the apostles, tells us that hereby they respected paradise, which God planted in the East, begging of him that they might be restored to that ancient country from whence they had been cast out. The practice must be referred, like many other superstitions, to a heathen origin: it was customary, long anterior to the coming of Christ, for the eastern nations to perform their worship with their faces turned to that part of the heavens where the sun displays his rising beams. A general opinion prevailed, that the Deity, whose essence was looked upon to be light, and who was considered to be circumscribed within certain limits,

\* Cyp. de Orat. Dom. p. 188.

dwelt in that part of the firmament from whence he sends forth the sun, the visible image of his benignity and glory. That the idolaters of the ancient world worshipped towards the east, appears from that singular vision of Ezekiel, descriptive of the prevalence of Egyptian, Persian, and Phœnician superstitions among the Jews: he saw “about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their *faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east.*” \* Virgil, describing the sacrifice previous to the battle between Æneas and Turnus, says:—

“Then to the rising sun he turns his eyes,  
And strews the beasts designed for sacrifice,  
With salt and meal.”

The early Christians, who were most of them converts from Heathenism, retained the ancient and universal custom of worshipping toward the east, though they rejected the gross idea from which it sprang, of the Deity residing in that part of the heavens. Clemens Alexandrinus, with a few others, however, still clung to the notion that the palace of Jehovah was situate in that direction, and hence assigns the following reasons for the practice. He tells us that herein they had respect to Christ; for as the east is the birth and womb of the natural day, from whence the sun (the fountain of all sensible light) does arise and spring, so Christ, the true Sun of Righteousness, who arose upon the world with the light of truth, when it sat in the darkness

\* Ezek. viii. 16.

† Æn. xii. 172—174.

of error and ignorance, is in Scripture styled the East ; and, therefore, since we must in our prayers turn our faces towards some quarter, it is fittest it should be towards the east ; especially since it is probable even from Scripture itself, that the majesty and glory of God is in a peculiar manner in that part of the heavens, and that the throne of Christ and the splendour of his humanity has its residence there.\* From the appellations given to Christ, many of the Fathers gathered a specious reason for the custom—"the light of the world"—"the day-spring from on high." The following passage in Zechariah is however their great stronghold : "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold a man : his name *Zemach*." The naked term *Zemach*, which our translators, after the example of Luther, ought to have retained in their version, denotes that which shoots forth and increases ; and is not only applied to vegetable growth, but to the rising and shining of a heavenly body. The rendering of the Septuagint, ἀνατολή, *day-spring*, adopted by the Fathers, led them to identify that Saviour whom they revered with the east, and to sanction the custom of turning towards that quarter when offering supplication.

The practice to which we are now adverting gave rise to a very general impression among the Gentiles, that the Christians worshipped the sun : a belief to which their forms of devotion certainly

• Stromat. vii. 856.



gave countenance. Tertullian, in replying to this calumny, admits the fact of their praying towards the east; but states, in spirited and eloquent language, the Christian notions of the Deity: "Others again," says he, "with more probability and reason, believe that the sun is the object of our adoration. If this be the case, we are joined with the Persians, although we do not adore its image painted upon a banner; since we have the sun itself with us, wherever we go, set in the heavens as in a shield. This suspicion, however, hath arisen from our well-known custom of turning towards the east when we pray. And many, even of yourselves, out of an affectation of sometimes adoring the heavenly bodies, move your lips towards the quarter in which the sun rises. The object of our worship is one God, who made out of nothing the whole frame of this universe; furnished with all the elements and bodies and spirits, by his word which commanded, by his power which ruled, for the glory of his own majesty; whence also the Greeks denominated the world by a word\* which implies order and beauty."† The same calumny met with a distinct reply from Athanasius: "We do not," says he, "worship towards the east, as if we thought God in any way shut up in those parts of the world, but because God is in himself, and is so styled in Scripture, 'the true light;' in turning therefore towards the created light, we do not worship it, but the great Creator of it; taking occasion from that most excellent element

\* Κόσμος.

† Tert. Apol. c. xvi. xvii.

to adore that God who was before all elements and ages of the world."

The same veneration for the east caused churches to be usually built, in very early times, with the principal entrance to the west, and the altar towards the east. There were a few exceptions to this position of the churches, but so occasional, as to show that the custom was all but universal. The splendid edifice erected at Tyre, at the beginning of the fourth century, by Paulinus the bishop, was an exception to the general rule: the entrance of that magnificent building was to the east, and the altar in the centre.\* Socrates also mentions that the church at Antioch, in Syria, was placed in a direction opposite to that which was usual. So ancient and so common was this reverence for the east among the heathen, that the first sacred structure mentioned in the Old Testament, the tabernacle, was so placed, that the people worshipped towards the west, for to that point the holy of holies stood. It is a mistake then to suppose that churches and cathedrals are built after the fashion of the tabernacle and temple: they are exactly after the pattern of the heathen edifices, which are described by Vitruvius as having the *ναῶς* to the east, and the *προναῶς* to the west.

This superstitious reverence for the east still lingers in the established church of our land. The rubric orders that the minister and people shall

\* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. x. 14.

repeat the Apostles' Creed, turning towards the east, that, "whilst we are making our profession of faith in the blessed Trinity, we may look towards that quarter of the heavens, where God is supposed to have his peculiar residence of glory."\* The non-observers of this direction in the establishment, are certainly guilty of a breach of that devotional decorum which the Church of England, in its wisdom, has enjoined upon its members. In Poland and Lithuania, matters were carried a little farther, with reference to the Creed, than they have been in our own country: the nobles there, not only turned toward the east, but drew their swords, in token that, if necessary, they would defend and seal the truth of it with their blood. The established church also regards it as a decent practice, that a corpse shall be buried with the feet eastward, and the face upward, that "so at the resurrection, the body may be ready to meet Christ, who is expected from the east, and be in a posture of prayer, as soon as it is raised."†

### THE CROSS.

To signify that they were not ashamed of Christ, whom the heathen vilified as a crucified malefactor, the early Christians were fond of exhibiting the sign of the cross in their devotions, to show that they triumphed in it as the symbol and representation of his death. The custom, therefore,

\* Wheatly on the Common Prayer, p. 149.

† Ibid. p. 497.

of expanding the hands in prayer, so as to represent a cross, obtained at an early period. Special honour was supposed to have been put upon this position when the Israelites overcame the Amalekites: the victory was attributed to Moses, stretching out his hands, forming with his body the figure of a cross. Such virtue was attributed to this sign, that it began to be used not only in prayer, but in every action of domestic life, inasmuch that Tertullian tells us in a well-known passage, that "upon every motion, at their going out or coming in, at dressing, at their going to bath, or to meals, or to bed, or whatever their employment or occasions called them to, they were wont to mark their foreheads with the sign of the cross."\* The transition from these usages to the actual worship of the cross was easy, and accordingly was soon effected. Both Minucius Felix and Tertullian notice the charges brought against the Christians of worshipping the cross; and disclaim the practice, applying to it the argument *ad hominem*, endeavouring to show that even had it been correct, the worshippers of false gods were equally exposed to blame, paying homage to images of wood. In Minucius and in Justin Martyr, there are some curious speculations respecting the prevalence of the cruciform shape. "We neither worship crosses," says the former, "nor wish to suffer on them. You, indeed, who adore wooden gods may, perhaps, be guilty of this folly. And what else

\* Tert. de Corona Militis, c. 3.

are your standards and banners, but crosses gilt and beautified? Your triumphant trophies bear the image of a crucified man. A ship under sail naturally represents the figure of a cross; and when a man stretches out his hands to heaven in an humble posture, he makes the same figure; so that the sign of the cross is either founded upon natural reason, or is the form of all religions."\* Justin exercises his imagination in the same way, and discovers the sacred configuration in almost every object upon which he gazes. "Observe," says he, "how impossible it is that any thing in the world should be regulated, or any mutual intercourse carried on, without employing this figure. The sea cannot be navigated unless this symbol, as the mast and yard-arm of the sail, remains firm in the ship. Without an instrument in this form the land cannot be ploughed: neither can they who dig exercise their labour, nor handicraft men pursue their occupations, without implements which are fashioned in like manner. The human figure also differs from those of irrational animals in no respect but this, that it is erect, and hath the hands extended; and in the countenance also hath the nose reaching downward from the forehead, by which we are able to breathe. This again shows no figure but that of the cross. It is spoken also by the prophet: 'The breath before our nostrils is Christ the Lord.' The signs also in use among yourselves show the force of the same

\* Min. Fel. Oct. c. xxix.

figure, as in the instance of standards and trophies, by which your progress is every where marked. In all these ye show the true sign of authority and power, although ye do it ignorantly."\* It is not surprising that the Pagans should regard this frequent use of a certain sign as a species of magic superstition; and that the ignorant devotees of an after age should bow before it, as something from which a potent virtue might be derived. The use of the sign of the cross is still retained in the Church of England, in her office of baptism; and many of her sons lament its discontinuance in the ministration of the Eucharist.† In King Edward the Sixth's liturgy, the priest was ordered to make the sign of the cross twice in baptism, upon the forehead and upon the breast of the child, and to use at the same time a form of exorcism, which, at the suggestion of Martin Bucer, was laid aside when the liturgy was reviewed.‡

### LITURGIES.

The question, whether precomposed prayers should be used in our approaches to the Divine

\* Justin Martyr, Apol. c. 72.

† Wheatly, p. 306.

‡ The following is the form:—"I command thee, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that thou come out and depart from these infants, whom our Lord Jesus Christ hath vouchsafed to call to his holy baptism, to be made members of his body and of his holy congregation. Therefore, thou cursed spirit, remember thy sentence, remember thy judgment, remember thy day to be at hand, wherein thou shalt burn in fire everlasting, prepared for thee and thy angels. And presume not hereafter to exercise any tyranny towards these infants, whom Christ hath bought with his precious blood, and by this his holy baptism called to be of his flock."

Being, or the worshipper left to the free and unfettered expression of existing wants and emotions, has given rise to long, and sometimes virulent, discussions.

The advocates of forms are accustomed to plead authority and antiquity in their behalf; but it will not be difficult to show that there is little or no ground for the supposition that the "old paths" can be cited in their behalf. The whole of the New Testament, the recognised directory of Christian worship, does not supply one instance of the use of precomposed prayer in the church. The proud and imperious language of the Pharisee was surely not derived from any prayer-book of the Jewish church; nor the humble, self-condemnatory address of the publican drawn from any manual which he conned in the temple's porch. The circumstances of the multitude of believers on the day of Pentecost, who continued in "prayers"—of Paul and Silas, who prayed at midnight in their dungeon at Philippi—of the Apostle, when he kneeled down with the Ephesian elders at Miletus, or bade his companions farewell on the Tyrian shore, commending them to God in prayer—the circumstances in which petition was offered upon these occasions, clearly forbid the supposition that any prescribed rule was followed. Had a liturgical service been given by the apostles to their followers, and left for the use of the primitive churches, it is inconceivable that it should not only have perished, but have sunk into such complete oblivion, that not a single passage

can be pointed out, in any ecclesiastical writer, mentioning any such document.

The posture which was observed in prayer, and which is often incidentally noticed by the early fathers, is positive proof against the use of liturgies. Both Clemens Alexandrinus and Tertullian mention the circumstance, that they prayed with the *eyes closed*, and the *hands stretched out towards heaven*—an attitude not compatible with reading, holding, and turning over a book. To avoid the interruption of external objects, it was the general practice to close the eyes during prayer: “We should close,” says Origen, “the eyes of the body, and elevate those of the soul.” Tertullian says expressly, “To that God we Christians look up with hands extended, because they are innocent; with head uncovered, because we have nothing of which we are ashamed; and pray *without a prompter, because we pray from the heart* ;” *denique sine monitore, quia de pectore, oramus*.\* The use of liturgies commenced soon after heretical notions upon the fundamental truths of religion had, to any extent, been disseminated; to prevent the infusion of Arian and Pelagian sentiments in the public services of devotion, the council of Laodicea ordered that every minister should keep to one form of prayer, instead of using the liberty before enjoyed.† The particular form he might compose himself, but was required, before using it, to submit it to the examination of “learned and

\* Tert. Apol. c. xxx.

† He was not to pray *pro arbitrio, sed semper easdem preces*.



experienced brethren." This regulation was sanctioned by the council of Carthage, A. D. 397; and A. D. 416, at the council of Milan, all prepared forms were ordered to be submitted to a synod before they were used. The evidence is then decidedly in favour of free prayer in the service of the church for the first three centuries; not until the fifth do we find liturgies imposed by ecclesiastical authority.

It is only as a question of expediency and utility that the adoption of liturgies deserves consideration. The most common, and one of the most powerful objections against their use is, that the repetition of the same words and sentences, from Sabbath to Sabbath, must pall the ear, and cease to interest the feelings. The Church of England has appointed the same prayers to be recited every time public worship is held; the consequence is, that the worshipper becomes so familiarized with the petition, that a habit of repeating it is contracted, without any occupation of mind about its contents; and thus what should be the service of the heart, becomes a mere effort of the memory. But this is by no means an evil *necessarily* involved in the use of liturgies; and might be avoided by the substitution of an occasional interchange of forms, in the stead of one unvarying formula.

Another strong objection to the use of liturgies, is their tendency to confine the mind within certain limits as to its desires and feelings, and to interfere with the work of the Spirit, suggesting what we

ought to pray for. On the other hand, it is argued, that free extempore prayer can accommodate itself to circumstances as they arise, and that it leaves the heart at liberty to "profit" by the "manifestation of the Spirit" in the hour and act of devotion. It is well observed, that a rigid uniformity of written prayers, "stirs not up any gift that is in us. They regulate a standard key, and which none can raise. The most holy minister can impress through them no distinctive stamp of his own gracious heart. He is constantly intercepted and restrained; and it is obvious that they can have none but an unfavourable influence on the growth of that devotional capacity which adapts itself with the most graceful promptitude to all occasions; and which, when others demand its exercise, cannot be guiltlessly suppressed." This objection we conceive to be fatal to the exclusive use of a liturgy: its universal imposition is a chain which confines the soul within a definite boundary; it damps devotional ardour; and, by precluding the expression of the high emotions of piety when "our hearts burn within us," it effectually prevents the sacred fire from being enkindled.

A constant adherence to forms of prayer, must, we believe, inevitably exercise a baneful influence upon the devotional character, but, in reality, this is not the question which we have now to try. The pious advocates of a liturgy do not plead for its universal adoption, but only for its use in the public services of religion. In domestic and in social

devotion, the evangelical episcopalian will now forego the form, and give utterance to his individual mind, to the free outpouring of the heart. "Far be it from me," says Bishop Hall, "to dishearten any good Christian from the use of conceived prayer in his private devotions, and, upon occasions, also in public. I would hate to be guilty of pouring so much water upon the Spirit to which I should gladly add oil rather. No; let the full soul freely pour out itself in gracious expressions of its holy thoughts into the bosom of the Almighty. Let both the sudden flashes of our quick ejaculations, and the constant flames of our more fixed conceptions, mount up from the altar of a zealous heart unto the throne of grace; and if there be some stops or solecisms in the fervent utterance of our private wants, these are so far from being offensive, that they are the most pleasing music to the ears of that God, unto whom our prayers come. Let them be broken off with sobs and sighs, and incongruities of our delivery, our good God is no otherwise affected to this imperfect elocution, than an indulgent parent is to the clipped and broken language of his dear child, which is more delightful to him than any other's smooth oratory. What I have professed concerning conceived prayers, is that which I have ever allowed, ever practised, both in private and public. God is a free Spirit, and so should ours be, in pouring out our voluntary devotions upon all occasions; nothing hinders but that this liberty and a public liturgy should be good friends, and go hand in hand

together; and whoever would forcibly separate them, let them have their own blame."

These are candid admissions and beautiful sentiments; and, to do justice to our pious episcopalian brethren, we must only argue the question of a liturgy with reference to the public offices of religion.

That the objections which are usually advanced against the practice of extempore prayer, in the dissenting congregations, are without any weight, we are not prepared to say. It is argued, that if the minister is not in a devotional frame of mind—if he is harassed and depressed by external circumstances—and the possibility of this may be entertained—there is an appearance of effort on his part, in conducting the devotions of the assembly, which materially injures the effect of the service. The sermon being a more purely intellectual engagement than prayer, an appearance of effort in it is in some degree natural, and expected by the audience, and is not, therefore, so painful; besides, he can relieve his mental embarrassment by a reference to his notes. Devotional feeling is at once checked and withered in the assembly by a want of freedom in the minister, and the absence of spontaneity in the prayer: the necessity under which, in such circumstances, he evidently labours to collect and search for materials as he goes along, arrests the attention, and diverts the thoughts of the worshipper from the service before him to some other object, in order to escape from a painful impression. This is an evil, we admit; and many

of the most highly-gifted servants of the altar among us have felt and acknowledged it: it is, however, but of occasional occurrence; though, while human nature and human life remain as they are, it will occur. With more force it may be alleged, that our practice of extempore preaching, in some degree, unfits us for extempore prayer. We come to the sanctuary with a mind much more intensely occupied with the subject we are going to discuss, than what would be the case if the sermon was written and read: and does not that concentration of the intellectual faculty upon the specific topic before us, necessarily, in some degree, disqualify us for a free, consecutive, flowing, and heartfelt address to God?

Another objection which has been advanced against the practice of public extempore prayer, is the difficulty of making it what it chiefly should be—PETITION; where the mind has not at the time a vivid impression of the Divine presence, and of its own essential and individual dependence. There is, indeed, a danger then of dissertation upon the topics adverted to—lecturing upon them—and converting prayer into a didactic address. A habit of this kind is very often contracted by the injudicious length of the prayer in our services: what is commonly called the long prayer is often of most unreasonable longitude—inducing weariness in the hearers, and compelling the speaker, in order to fill up the interval he chooses to occupy, to discuss rather than to supplicate.

Comparing, however, the exclusive adoption of a liturgy in our public services, with the exclusive practice of free prayer, we have no difficulty in deciding strongly in favour of the latter; but still there is no necessity to adopt either, and the union of both plans might be of the greatest advantage. Bishop Hall's idea of making "liberty and a public liturgy good friends," would be, in the opinion of the writer, the best method of conducting public devotion; for the evils which attend a rigid adherence to either practice would be avoided, and the advantages of both secured. One positive benefit which is supposed to accrue from the introduction of a liturgy is, that that agreement in asking, which our Lord mentions with special approval, is more readily and fully attained. In extempore prayer it is said that the hearer is kept in suspense, until the conclusion of the sentence, as to the precise nature of the petition; and that if the minister is not in full self-possession—if his equanimity of mind is disturbed, and his periods become parenthetical and involved—only a confused idea is communicated of the precise blessing requested. This may sometimes occur, but where there is a competent ministry it will not be frequent. It is, however, an important consideration, that the use of a responsive form of prayer would give the people a decided and active part in the service—a position which they ought to occupy—and more effectually secure their attention to it, by allotting to them a personal and an apparent interest in it. It is a prevalent arrangement

with us, yet for what reason it is difficult to say, that while the people have the whole service openly to themselves in praise, they have no public part in it at all in prayer.

It is an idle objection to say, that praying from a book is not "praying in the Holy Ghost." It is not the office of the Spirit, in prayer, to suggest its language, or even, *ordinarily*, to propose its topics; but to dispose the heart to the exercise, and enable it to desire and receive the blessings that are solicited. What particular blessings ought to be sought in prayer, the Bible is competent to inform us. We learn Divine truth from a book; and by giving us an apprehension of its nature, and impressing us with its importance, the Spirit fills us "with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." We offer praise from a book; and by corresponding our dispositions of mind to the grateful sentiments expressed, the Spirit enables us to offer acceptable thanksgivings, "making melody in our hearts." And by adopting a form of prayer, the "Spirit of grace and supplications" can perform all that is important in his office, rectifying the natural dispositions of the depraved heart, and giving it an appetite for the spiritual blessings sought. Happy will be the day when the non-conforming and the episcopalian churches shall rise superior to educational prejudices and the force of custom; the one party introducing free prayer into their public devotional exercises, and the other party connecting with their free prayer a

liturgical form, in which the congregation shall take part.\*

It is too often the case, that when the subject of liturgies is introduced, dissenters are in the habit of considering it as one which may be settled by a reference to the defects of the liturgy of the Church of England. But the adoption of a form for public devotion, and the adoption of *the* form used by a particular community, are totally different questions. There is scarcely any thing more surprising, than the adulation with which enlightened episcopalians, are accustomed to regard their liturgy: glaringly defective as it must instantly appear to a pious mind, when there is not a single petition throughout the daily services for the unregenerate part of the congregation. The Athanasian creed, which is read as the belief of the congregation thirteen times every year, is grossly objectionable in the terms in which it states the doctrine of the Trinity; and the Nicene creed read every Sabbath morning is far too scholastic and artificial, and employs language with reference to the person of Christ, such as "God of

\* Since the above remarks were written I have pleasure in finding the opinion of Mr. Walford, in his *Treatise on Prayer*, and that of his reviewer, in the *Eclectic*, coincident with mine. "A combination," says Mr. Walford, "of both the modes of devotion, would, I think, be productive of the best effects. The responsive form of the Litany is, in my apprehension, well adapted to maintain attention, by giving, as well to the congregation as to the officiating minister, an active part in the service."

"The conviction," says the reviewer, known to be a distinguished minister among us, "that the 'best effects,' or most perfect form of public worship, would be found to result from 'a combination of both modes of devotion,' the liturgical and the free, has not only long been our private individual opinion, but is, we believe, increasingly and extensively entertained."—*Eclectic Rev.*, Sept. 1836.



God, Light of Light, very God of very God," which is neither scriptural nor intelligible. The Lord's prayer is necessarily repeated five times every Sabbath morning: on sacramental days six times: and should the service for baptism occur, the same prayer would be repeated seven times in the course of one continued service. Two creeds are recited, two prayers for the king; and, indeed, there is scarcely a petition for any blessing which is not reiterated. Supposing, however, these and other objections to be removed, and the liturgy of the Church of England to be made in our estimation unexceptionable, we could not consent to receive it upon the authority which they do who now use it—the law of the land.

Among the counsels given by our Lord respecting prayer, he mentions that which is the prevailing fault of the English liturgy with disapprobation, the "vain repetitions" of the "heathen," and their "much speaking." This practice prevailed among the Jews, and the Gentile nations of antiquity, in civil as well as religious matters. Several instances of this vain repetition are given by Lightfoot: "Let the parricide be dragged!" "We beseech thee, Augustus, let the parricide be dragged!" "This is the thing we ask, let the parricide be dragged!" "Hear us, Cæsar, let the false accusers be cast to the lion!" "Hear us, Cæsar, let the false accusers be condemned to the lion!" Terence, in one of his plays, refers to the same custom:—

"Ohe! jam desine Deos, uxor, gratulando obtundere,  
 Tuam esse inventam gnatam: nisi illos ex tuo ingenio judicas,  
 Ut nil credas intelligere, nisi idem dictum sit centies."

"Pray thee, wife, cease from stunning the gods with thanksgivings because thy child is in safety; unless thou judgest of them from thyself, that they cannot understand a thing unless they are told of it a hundred times." \*

"Vain repetitions" were introduced into the church in imitation of heathen practices, from an unworthy notion, that the Divine Being is rendered placable by continued service, whereas he is more ready to give than we are to receive. Wherever there is a right state of heart, the applicant may look to God in confidence for his promised blessing; but where there is only bodily exercise, the hundred-fold repetition of a prayer will profit nothing.

To conclude. The time, the posture, and the mode of prayer, with or without a form, are matters of minor importance, if the engagement is entered upon "in spirit and in truth." The most becoming attitude—the most eloquent phraseology—the most frequent exercise—will administer no comfort, bring no blessing, unless the heart feels what the words express and the act itself indicates. It is not the homage of the knee, not the testimony of the lip, that the Divine Being accepts: he looks beyond the outward man, through the veil of flesh and blood, to the state of the mind: it is the homage of the heart, penetrated with a sense of its guilt, grateful for past mercies, and panting for fresh supplies

\* Terence, *Heaut.* v. 880.

from his infinite fulness, that he demands and approves. "God is a Spirit," and the worship which he will accept must be adapted to his spiritual nature and revealed perfections : the number of our prayers, the quantity of worship addressed to him, upon which corrupt churches have laid so much stress, can be to him of no value : the externals of devotion are not regarded by him, only as they are expressive of those emotions of humility, gratitude and faith, which are the principles he condescends to notice.

" This, this is the worship the Saviour made known,  
When she of Samaria found him  
By the Patriarch's well, sitting weary, alone,  
With the stillness of noontide around him.

" How sublime, yet how simple, the homage he taught  
To her, who inquired by that fountain,  
If Jehovah at Solyma's shrine would be sought,  
Or adored on Samaria's mountain ?

" For God is a Spirit! and they who aright  
Would perform the pure worship he loveth,  
In the heart's holy temple will seek with delight  
That spirit the Father approveth.

" And many that prophecy's truth can declare,  
Whose bosoms have livingly known it ;  
Whom God hath instructed to worship him there,  
And convinced that his mercy will own it.

" The temple that Solomon built to his name  
Now lives but in history's story ;  
Extinguished long since is its altar's bright flame,  
And vanished each glimpse of its glory.

" But the Christian, made wise by a wisdom divine,  
Though all human fabrics may falter,  
Still finds in his heart a far holier shrine,  
Where the fire burns unquenched on the altar."

Prayer is the most important exercise of devotion ; and just in proportion as it is rightly observed, will religion flourish, and as it is neglected, will all the pulsations of spiritual life be arrested. By meditation and self examination it should be preceded, and with solicitude for the blessings requested it should be followed.

An old writer remarks :—

“1. Before Prayer.—Meditate on the promises and presence of God. Ask his gracious help and the evidence of his Spirit. Lay aside all malice, guile, envy, hatred, and seek to have thy heart filled with heavenly love. Remember thy own vileness, and God’s awful majesty. Disburthen thy mind of worldly cares and thoughts.

“2. In Prayer.—Lift up thy heart with thy hands, and place before thee Christ and his merits. Watch over thy thoughts. Recover thyself from distractions, and improve them to thy further humiliation and watchfulness.

“3. After Prayer.—Thank the Lord for any degree of liberty and enlargement. Pray for pardon, and the sprinkling blood of atonement. Wait God’s leisure. Mark answers to prayer when God gives thee greater confidence in his love ; more cheerfulness of spirit ; grace to persevere in the face of many denials ; a spirit of self-examination and circumspection ; and when he gives thee thy requests, let it stir thee up to thankfulness, and quicken thee in his way.”

In public and in private—in the closet and in the

sanctuary—in the family circle and in the social prayer-meeting—we shall do well to remember the advice of Bernard:—

“Sic ora, quasi assumptus et præsentatus ante faciam ejus, in excelso throno, ubi millia militum ministrant ei.”

“So pray, as if you were taken up and presented before God, sitting upon his royal throne on high, with millions of his glorious servitors constantly ministering to him.”

**" PRAISE YE THE LORD:** for it is good to sing praises to our God  
 For it is pleasant, and praise is comely.  
 Jehovah doth build up Jerusalem,  
 He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel;  
 He healeth the broken in heart,  
 And bindeth up their wounds.  
 He telleth the number of the stars,  
 He calleth them all by their names.  
 Great is our Lord, and of great power;  
 His understanding is infinite.  
 The Lord lifteth up the oppressed:  
 He casteth the wicked down to the ground.  
**SING UNTO JEHOVAH** with thanksgiving!  
 Sing praises upon the harp unto our God!  
 He covereth the heaven with clouds,  
 He giveth rain upon the earth,  
 He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains,  
 He giveth to the beast his food,  
 And to the young ravens when they cry.  
 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse,  
 Nor takes pleasure in the swiftness of a man:  
 The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him,  
 In those that hope in his mercy.  
**PRAISE THE LORD, O JERUSALEM!**  
**PRAISE THY GOD, O ZION!**  
 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates,  
 He hath blessed thy children within thee;  
 He maketh peace in thy borders,  
 He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.  
 He sheweth his word unto Jacob,  
 His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.  
 He hath not done so with every nation;  
 They have not known his judgments.  
**PRAISE JEHOVAH!"—Ps. cxlvii.**

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PRAISE.

PRAISE is that part of devotional duty which recognises the perfection and excellence of the Divine nature, the benevolence and rectitude of the Divine administration, and the obligations of all creatures to be grateful to the Creator, who sustains them in existence, and gives them, from his own unbounded fulness, whatever tends to render that existence happy and desirable. There are two ways in which the great Invisible has been pleased to make himself known unto us; by his works, and by his word. "The heavens declare the glory of God:" the inscription of his "eternal power and Godhead" is legibly written upon the "things that he has made." To the apprehension of an intelligent piety, the heavens are gay with his splendour, the earth is fair with his beauty, the night is solemn with his majesty, and nature, through all her realms, is vocal with his praise. But it is especially in his word that the Divine Being unveils himself, that he gives us an insight into his own glorious character, and communicates whatever our limited

faculties are at present capable of apprehending of his greatness and glory.

In the character of God, as drawn out upon the page of Scripture, there is every thing calculated to render him an object of delight and grateful affection to all virtuous creatures: there is every quality to command esteem and love—a constellation of amiable features—an array of the most marvellous moral excellence. There is nothing of good of which we can conceive, but what may be found in him, and existing in the highest state of fulness and perfection. Hence, to angels—to pure and perfected natures, whose intellectual vision is dimmed by no cloud of error and of sin,—he is “the fairest among ten thousand,” “exalted far above all blessing and praise;” for in his mind they behold a blaze of excellence and glory, in which, as in the garden of Eden to the ancestor of our race, every thing is “pleasant to the eye, and good for food.”

But the moral depravation of our nature has incapacitated man from offering “sacrifices of praise;” his soul clings to the dust; he loves earth, with its vanity and sin; his appetite and taste are essentially vitiated; and hence, in vain is the beauty and glory of the Divine character unfolded before him—the picture has no attraction to his eye, and wins no admiration from his lip. Owing to a dark and clouded mind, we are naturally incapable of appreciating the character of God: and under the guilt, and subject to the condemnation incurred by manifold offences, we are not in a condition to join



in any gratulatory act of devotion. It is not with pleasure, but with pain, that we recur to the thought of the Divine Being; his name and his attributes, in such circumstances, pour no balm into the heart; we “remember God, and we are troubled;” and when he breaks in upon us in his providence, by affliction or by death, instead of the intrusion being welcome, it produces shame, remorse, and apprehension; and the guilty spirit, if compelled to give expression to its feelings, would exclaim, when thus arrested by its Maker, “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!” There must be some great and decided change wrought in our character and condition before we can derive any pleasure from the contemplation of God, or offer him sincerely any praise. We must not be “conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds,” in order to prove “the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Till then he is no object of delightful contemplation; and when he crosses our paths, in nature or in providence, it is with a culprit-feeling that the thunder of his chariot-wheels is heard: his may be the power that awes, and the greatness that overwhelms—his may be the holiness that dazzles, and the wisdom that astonishes, his angel subjects—but the exhibition of this perfection to us produces no complacency, excites no satisfaction, and inspires no praise, so long as we are subject to “the law of sin and death.”

It is when the truths of the gospel are experienced by us, when the scripture ground of pardon

and acceptance is embraced and trusted in, when God is apprehended by us "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," that we derive comfort from him, and are disposed to offer thanksgiving to him. A "new song is put into our mouths, even praises to our God:" we "love him, because he has first loved us:" we "joy in him through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the atonement:" "believing in Jesus, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Praise is then the offering of a pardoned and renewed soul to Him who has "wrought us for this selfsame thing:" it is founded upon a knowledge of him, and a sense of reconciliation to him; an acquaintance with him as our friend and portion; an apprehension of him as that great Being who, at the same time that he is maintaining in happiness and bliss an innumerable company of angels, and feeding the universe from the resources of his own nature, is redeeming our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. It takes cognizance of his character and unsearchable perfection—his dealings in providence, and his dispensations in grace—his daily mercies, and his nightly blessings—his goodness in seedtime and harvest—his wisdom in appointing "the moon for seasons," and the "stars to rule the night;" in short, all that is beautiful in nature and valuable in social life, every temporal comfort and spiritual gift, will be attributed, by the devout heart, to the Father of Mercies; and acknowledged with feelings and expressions of

gratitude. Such views had the Psalmist of the worthiness of God, and of the goodness that pervades his administration, that he calls upon all animate and inanimate existence to unite with him in this service: "Fire and hail; snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word—Mountains and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars—Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl—Let them praise the name of the Lord."

Plutarch, one of the most pleasing of the Greek writers, advances it, as the sacred duty of mankind, to "hymn the gods," who alone have endowed them with an articulate voice. This sentiment has met with universal recognition; for all nations acquainted with either poetry or religion, have songs and verses devoted to the powers and attributes of their divinities. The poetry and mythology of the Greeks were intimately connected; the former was the tongue of the latter; it entered deeply into the celebration of its rites, gave popularity to its festivals, and immortality to its fictions. The hymns of Homer and Callimachus may have been intended merely for individual recitation; but the choral song early accompanied the sacred ceremonial: the solemn and swelling tone of the dithyrambic hymns was heard in the religious festivals of the Athenians; and whilst the scenic exhibitions delighted the sight, the union of music and verse ravished the ear. The literature of the Orientals exhibits the same harmony between religion and verse—the same union between the "sons

of God" and the "daughters of men;" and the Arab, even now, sits down at the door of his tent chanting the moral apophthegms and luscious dreams of the followers of the prophet. It is, however, especially in Judea that we see devotion and the muse dwelling together in unity—twin-sisters that God hath joined—going up to his house in company, worshipping hand in hand at the throne, weeping at the altar, and bowing in silent adoration before the glorious cloud, flashing in awful brightness from the holiest place. It is no extravagant assumption, that the lyre of Jubal was attuned to the harmony of verse; and our great poet indulges the imagination, that the singing of the birds in Paradise initiated our first parents into the art of sacred song.

The duty of addressing praise to God, may be performed in various ways. Besides the simple acknowledgment, by the tongue, of his glorious attributes and bountiful dealings, the practice of connecting the acknowledgment with a musical accompaniment, commends itself to our attention by an express divine sanction. In the Jewish church, singing was ordained as a part of public worship—an appointment which the practice of the Saviour, and the precepts of the apostles, render obligatory upon us. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."\* "Speaking to yourselves," observes the apostle, "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual

\* James v. 13.

songs; singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord."\* The custom of singing, and not merely pronouncing, the praises of God, originated a peculiar class of compositions, metrically arranged, in order to be adapted with facility to some suitable melody. From the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt, to the present day, "the Lord's song" has been heard in the solemn assemblies of the church, and the oratory of the individual worshipper—a cloud of incense rising from the altar of devout and grateful hearts to the throne of God, and meeting with as gracious a welcome there as the never-ceasing cry of "Holy, Holy, Holy," from the ten thousand "blessed voices uttering joy" in the presence-chamber of the Deity.

The history of hymnology, a brief review of which will be necessary, abounds with curious and interesting information.

#### JEWISH HYMNS.

The first metrical composition upon record, dedicated to the praise and glory of God, is that sung by Moses and the children of Israel, upon the shores of the Red Sea, after their miraculous escape from the pursuing host of Pharaoh. This triumphant ode was sung by the men; and the women, headed by Miriam, answered them by repeating the two first lines of the song, altering only the first word, as a chorus, introduced, probably, at

\* Eph. v. 19.

different stages of the hymn. This production derives interest from the reference made to it in the Revelations. The evangelist beheld those who had won the victory over the "beast,"—Antichrist, the spiritual Pharaoh,—standing by the "sea of glass mingled with fire," as Israel stood by the Red Sea; the victors in heaven have "the harps of God" in their hands, as Miriam and her attendants had timbrels—"and they sing the *song of Moses* the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."\* In the praises, then, of the Christian church, this noble hymn may with propriety be introduced: it celebrates, indeed, an event in the local history of Israel, which occurred ages and centuries ago; yet we moderns are not to "forget the works of the Lord," but to "consider the days of old, the years of many generations:" at the same time, the use made of it by the redeemed host in heaven, shows that it is susceptible of an application to the final salvation and triumph of the whole church of Christ.

## PART. I.

## MOSES.

I will sing to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously;  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.  
My strength and my song is Jehovah;  
And he is become to me for salvation:  
This is my God, and I will celebrate him—  
The God of my Father, and I will exalt him.

## CHORUS BY THE MEN.

Jehovah is mighty in battle!  
Jehovah is his name!

\* Rev. xv. 2, 3.

## CHORUS BY MIRIAM AND THE WOMEN.

O sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously!  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

## PART II.

## MOSES.

Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea;  
And his chosen captains are drowned in the Red Sea.  
The depths have covered them; they went down;  
They sank to the bottom as a stone.  
Thy right hand, Jehovah, is become glorious in power;  
Thy right hand, Jehovah, dasheth in pieces the enemy.  
And in greatness of thine excellence thou overthrowest them that rise  
against thee;  
Thou sendest forth thy wrath, which consumeth them as stubble:  
Even at the blast of thy displeasure the waters are gathered together:  
The floods stand upright as a heap;  
Congealed are the depths in the very heart of the sea.

## CHORUS BY MIRIAM AND THE WOMEN.

O sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously!  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

## PART III.

## MOSES.

The enemy said, "I will pursue, I shall overtake,  
I shall divide the spoil; my soul shall be satiated with them:  
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them."  
Thou didst blow with thy wind—the sea covered them;  
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.  
Who is like thee among the gods, O Jehovah!  
Who is like thee, glorious in holiness,  
Fearful in praises, performing wonders?  
Thou stretchest out thy right hand—the earth swalloweth them!  
Thou, in thy mercy, leadest the people whom thou hast redeemed;  
Thou, in thy strength, guidest to the habitation of thy holiness.

## CHORUS BY MIRIAM AND THE WOMEN.

O sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously!  
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

## PART IV.

## MOSES.

The nations have heard, and are afraid;  
Sorrow hath seized the inhabitants of Palestine.  
Already are the dukes of Edom in consternation;  
And the mighty men of Moab, trembling hath seized them

All the inhabitants of Canaan do faint.  
 Fear and dread shall fall upon them;  
 Through the greatness of thine arm they shall be still as a stone :  
 Till thy people, Jehovah, pass over (Jordan),  
 Till the people pass over, whom thou hast redeemed.  
 Thou shalt bring them and plant them in the mount of thine inheritance :  
 The place for thy rest, which thou, Jehovah, hast made ;  
 The sanctuary, Jehovah, which thy hands have established.

GRAND CHORUS BY ALL.

JEHOVAH FOR EVER AND EVER SHALL REIGN.\*

The Old Testament abounds with various other specimens of sacred song, used by the Jews in their public and private devotions, commemorating the power and goodness of the Deity, and the individual or national mercies “commanded” by him. We have a hymn composed by David when he brought the ark into the tent he had pitched for it; and another is mentioned on occasion of the dedication of the temple, of which only the chorus is given in the history—“the trumpeters and singers were as one, making one sound in praising and thanking the Lord, saying :—

*Ki tob : ki leolam chasdo.*

“For he is good : for his mercy is endless.”

This seems to have been the 136th Psalm, or the “great Hallel”—a song of praise which was in daily use among the Jews. The composition is very singular, the burden of the song being repeated in every verse. The former part of each verse was

\* Exod. xv. 1—19.



probably sung by the Levites, and the latter as a chorus by all the people.

- “ *Priests.* O give thanks unto the Lord !  
*People.* For he is good, for his mercy is endless.  
*Pr.* O give thanks unto the God of gods !  
*Peo.* For his mercy is endless.  
*Pr.* O give thanks to the Lord of lords !  
*Peo.* For his mercy is endless.  
*Pr.* To him who alone doeth great wonders !  
*Peo.* For his mercy is endless.  
*Pr.* To him who by wisdom made the heavens !  
*Peo.* For his mercy is endless.” &c.

There is a hymn now chanted by the Caraites in Jerusalem, in their public services, in which a similar construction is observed.

- “ *Cantor.* On account of the palace which is laid waste :  
*People.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* On account of the temple which is destroyed .  
*P.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* On account of the walls which are pulled down .  
*P.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* On account of our majesty which is gone :  
*P.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* On account of our great men who are cast down :  
*P.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* On account of the precious stones which are burned :  
*P.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* On account of the priests who have stumbled :  
*P.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* On account of our kings who have despised him :  
*P.* We sit down alone and weep.  
*C.* We beseech thee, have mercy upon Sion :  
*P.* Gather the children of Jerusalem.  
*C.* Make haste, Redeemer of Sion :  
*P.* Speak to the heart of Jerusalem.  
*C.* May beauty and majesty surround Sion :  
*P.* And turn with thy mercy to Jerusalem.  
*C.* Remember the shame of Sion :  
*P.* Make new again the ruins of Jerusalem.  
*C.* May the royal government shine again over Sion :  
*P.* Comfort those who mourn at Jerusalem.  
*C.* May joy and gladness be found upon Sion :  
*P.* A branch shall spring forth at Jerusalem.”

The book of Psalms is expressly a collection of inspired odes, some of them admirably adapted for the public service of the church. Hooker calls it "the flower of all things profitable in other books;" Calvin describes it as the "anatomy of all the parts of the mind;" and Augustine denominates it "an abridgment of the whole Scripture." As prophecies, many of the Psalms delineate the person of the Messiah, and the glories of his reign, in a striking and emphatic manner; as hymns addressed to the Deity, they embody the loftiest sentiments of piety with the purest spirit of devotion; and, as poems, they exhibit some of the most ancient and splendid specimens of poetry that the literature of the world can boast. In such veneration were they held in the primitive ages of the Christian church, that the fathers assure us that the whole book was frequently learned by heart, and ministers of all gradations were expected to repeat it from memory. Still honoured are these invaluable scriptures with the regards of the pious of all denominations: they form words of prayer and of praise for them, in retirement and in the sanctuary: they are repeated without weariness, and are in daily use as memorials of former mercies, and supplications for present blessings.

The Psalms, as a collection of sacred odes, exhibit almost all the varieties of this species of poetical writing. In some, the ode appears in its simple form—a narrative of facts in the private life of the psalmist, or the national history of his

country, but in an adorned and figurative style. Some are elegiac, composed on occasions of distress and mourning—tender, plaintive, and pathetic—celebrating the trials of the writer, the loss of friends, the temptations of a sorely vexed and troubled spirit. Some are didactic, enouncing the precepts of religion, grave maxims of morality, for the most part in simple strains, but occasionally adorned with figures of expression. Some, and but a few, are pastoral; the imagery taken from rural scenes and occupations. Some are dramatic, consisting of dialogues between different persons—sometimes the psalmist himself, the chorus of the priests, and the leader of the Levitical band; and sometimes the Lord of the Jewish polity, the incarnate Saviour, and the grateful and rejoicing church. The style of composition is, of course, as varied as the character and subject of the poems: now cheerful, sprightly, and triumphant; now stately, solemn, and magnificent; now soft, expressive, and touching. The great characteristic of the ancient Hebrew poetry is seen in the construction of almost all the Psalms—the adoption of corresponding versicles. The period is divided into members, answering to one another both in sense and sound; the sentiment expressed in the first, is amplified, or repeated in different terms, in the second; yet never in such a manner as to enfeeble the style and weaken its energy.

The Psalms, though originally written for musical recitation, were not all designed for congregational

worship, nor adopted by the Jews in the temple ritual. Some of them are so obviously unfitted for congregational use, as to render the conclusion probable, that only a selection was employed from the general body of Hebrew devotional poetry. Lightfoot, with his usual learning, has endeavoured to ascertain what compositions were commonly used by the Jews in their public religious service; assigning, from the Gemara, some fanciful reasons for the selection. On the first day of the week they sang the 24th Psalm—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:" on the second day they sang the 48th—"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of God:" on the third day, the 82d—"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty:" on the fourth, the 94th—"O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth:" on the fifth, the 81st—"Sing aloud unto God our strength:" on the sixth, the 93d—"The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty:" on the Sabbath, the 92d, entitled, a Psalm for the Sabbath-day—"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." Besides these psalms, which were sung each recurring week in the temple, particular compositions were appointed for the different festivals during the year. Thus, on the first day of the year, the feast of trumpets, the 81st Psalm was sung—"Sing aloud unto God;" and at the evening sacrifice, the 29th—"Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty." On the first day of the feast of tabernacles, the 105th—"O give thanks unto the Lord:

on the second, the 29th, as on the feast of trumpets : on the third, the 50th—"The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken : " on the fourth, the 94th, as in the regular weekly service on that day : on the fifth, the 95th—"O come let us sing unto the Lord : " on the sixth, the 80th—"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel : " on the seventh, the 82d—"God standeth in the congregation." The fifth verse of the 47th Psalm—"God is gone up with a shout"—was used at the removal of the ark : the 135th, and 136th, at the dedication of the temple : and the 97th, 98th, 99th, and 100th, on occasions, probably, of solemn national thanksgiving. At the feast of the passover the lesser Hallel was sung, consisting of the six short Psalms from the 113th to the 118th. In addition to the Psalms here specified, there are, doubtless, many more in the Psalter which were in common use among the Jews at the hour of sacrifice, in the religious festival, or at periods of general and solemn convention.

The 103d Psalm is a beautiful specimen of Hebrew praise ; and is so evangelical in its spirit and sentiment, as to be appropriate for Christian use, without any alteration except giving it, in the congregation, a plural form :—

“ Bless Jehovah, O my soul ;  
 And all that is within me, bless his holy name !  
 Bless Jehovah, O my soul,  
 And forget not all his benefits ;  
 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities,  
 Who healeth all thy diseases,  
 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction,  
 Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy,

Who satisfieth thy desire with good things,  
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.  
Jehovah executeth righteousness  
And judgment for those that are oppressed.  
He made known his ways unto Moses,  
His acts unto the children of Israel.  
Jehovah is merciful and gracious,  
Long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy.  
He will not always call to judgment,  
Nor keep his anger for ever.  
He dealeth not with us according to our sins,  
Nor rewardeth us according to our iniquities ;  
For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is his mercy towards them that fear him.  
As far as the east is from the west,  
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.  
As a father pitieth his children,  
So Jehovah pitieth those that fear him :  
For he knoweth our frame,  
He remembereth we are but dust.  
As for man, his days are as grass ;  
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.  
For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone,  
And the place thereof knoweth it no more.  
The mercy of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon those  
that fear him,  
And his righteousness unto children's children,  
To such as keep his covenant,  
To such who remember his commandments to do them.  
Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens,  
And his kingdom ruleth over all.  
Praise Jehovah, ye his angels,  
Mighty ones, that do his commands,  
Hearkening to the voice of his word !  
Praise Jehovah, all his hosts,  
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure !  
Praise Jehovah, all his works,  
In all places of his dominion !  
Praise Jehovah, O my soul !"

It is highly probable that this Psalm was composed by David upon the cessation of the plague, which his conduct in numbering the people had brought upon them : considering it in this light, many passages in it have peculiar significance and

beauty. He speaks of his “diseases being healed, and his life redeemed from destruction”—of the Divine Being “not always chiding”—of his angels “excelling in strength;” a proof of which he had witnessed, in seventy thousand Israelites having been cut off in a few hours—of his own obligations to gratitude, who had not been smitten, though the great aggressor. In the latter part of the reign of James I., a number of psalms and hymns were published, among which there is one entitled, “For deliverance from a public sickness.” This production of the Christian hymnist, though by no means the best in the collection, is not unworthy of a place beside that of the Jewish psalmist:—

“ The pestilence, and other public sicknesses, are those arrows of the Almighty wherewith he punisheth public transgressions. This hymn, therefore, is to praise him when he shall unslack the bow which was bent against us; and the longer he withholds his hand, the more constantly ought we to continue our public thanksgivings; for when we forget to persevere in praising God for his mercies past, we usually revive those sins that will renew his judgments.

“ When thou would'st, Lord, afflict a land,  
Or scourge thy people that offend,  
Prompt to fulfil thy dread command,  
Thy creatures on Thee all attend;  
And Thou, to execute thy word,  
Hast famine, sickness, fire, and sword.

“ And here among us, for our sin,  
A sore disease hath lately reigned,  
Whose fury so unstayed hath been,  
It could by nothing be restrained;  
But overthrew both weak and strong,  
And took away both old and young.

“ To Thee our cries we humbly sent,  
Thy wonted pity, Lord, to prove;  
Our wicked ways we did repent,  
Thy visitation to remove:

And Thou thine angel didst command  
To stay his wrath-inflicting hand.

“ For which thy love, in thankful wise,  
Both hearts and hands to thee we raise,  
And in the stead of former cries,  
Do sing thee, now, a song of praise;  
By whom the mercy yet we have,  
To escape the never-filled grave.”

The 104th Psalm is another hymn of praise, which celebrates the power and providence of God, and occupies the front rank among these sublime compositions. “ As a poem,” says Mr. Montgomery, “ had it been found in the Greek Anthology, how would it have been extolled by critics as the most perfect specimen of lyric song in classical records—the most precious relic of antiquity in its kind—for the symmetry of its parts, the beauty of its imagery, the splendour of its diction, and the diversity of its subjects ; embracing the whole of the phenomena of nature, by day and by night, the living and the dead creatures of Almighty power, their destruction and renovation, the economy of providence, natural death and the renewal of life, by the sovereign dispensations of one only, eternal, all-wise, and all-gracious Being ! Had Handel, instead of wasting his wonderful harmonies and his inimitable melodies on verbiage unworthy of them, in his rhyming oratorios—had Handel set this Psalm, from beginning to end, to such music as he only could compose, and compose only when inspired himself by the language of inspiration—he might, indeed, have produced a worthy companion-piece to his own



unrivalled Messiah. The plan of this divine ode is perfect; every link in the chain of circumstances is consecutive, progressive, and occupying its own peculiar place; at the same time the transitions are so admirable, that, while nothing can be more natural, the whole is the consummation of art, hiding itself like light, which reveals every thing but its own identity. Take one section, from the nineteenth to the twenty-fourth verse, inclusive:—  
 ‘He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.—Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.—The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.—The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together and lay them down in their dens.—Man goeth forth unto his work and labour till evening.—O Lord! how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.’”\*

#### CHRISTIAN HYMNS.

Our Lord himself set an example to his followers of singing hymns. In celebrating the last supper he sung a hymn with his disciples—the Hallel, consisting of six psalms—but the word *ὕμναυτες* may merely mean a kind of recitative reading, or chanting.† The primitive Christians, in this instance, trod in the footsteps of the Saviour. When Peter and John were delivered from the council,

\* Introductory Essay to Horne on the Psalms, p. 54, 55.

† Matt. xxvi. 30.

the second psalm was evidently sung by the multitude, or repeated with some considerable inflexion of the voice.\* In the Corinthian church, in the days of the apostle Paul, we are told that each one had a psalm; which may imply that a selection was then in use.† The 73d was the morning, and the 141st the evening, psalm of the early Christians; and they are admirably adapted to the times of fiery trial in which they lived, when, “troubled on every side” themselves, they “saw the wicked in prosperity.”‡

The first hymns of the Christian church were doubtless of an inspired character, selected from the pages of the Old and New Testament. The following are notices of some of them:—

#### THE TERSANCTUS (TPIZATION), OR SERAPHIC HYMN.

When Isaiah was solemnly dedicated to the prophetic office, in the Jewish temple, his inauguration was accompanied with a visible display of the Divine glory; and the voices of attendant seraphim were heard, celebrating the purity of the Divine character.

“In the year in which Uzziah the king died, I saw Jehovah, sitting on a throne high and lofty; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood seraphim: each one of them had six wings: with two of them he covereth his face, with two of them he covereth his feet, and two of them he useth in flying. And they cried alternately, and said:—

“Holy! Holy! Holy! Jehovah, God of Hosts!  
The whole earth is filled with his glory.”§

\* Acts iv. 24.

† Cor. xiv. 26.

‡ Bingham Antiq. lib. xiv.

§ Isaiah vi. 1, 2, 3.

This hymn is formed upon the Jewish practice of alternate singing; the seraphim being divided into two choirs, the one responding to the other. It is peculiarly a song of praise, celebrating the moral perfection of the Divine nature, and the manifestation of the glory of the Deity in the visible creation. The thrice repeated expression, *holy*, the fathers supposed to indicate the plurality of persons in the unity of the Godhead.\*

This hymn was very early introduced into the service of the church: and it is probable that, in imitation of the seraphim, the hymns used by the primitive Christians in their assemblies were confined to the glorification of their God and Saviour, and did not assume a supplicatory, or even an expository, form. The disciples of the apostles had other engagements more pressing upon them than the composition of sacred songs: those already furnished in the inspired volume would, therefore, be resorted to, and would be amply sufficient, at that time, for the occasions of public and of social worship. The use of the *Tersanctus* soon became universal: in singing it, the people were supposed to join with the invisible host of heaven in chanting the sublime praises of God: the church above and the church below forming one communion in this act of worship. We learn from Chrysostom†

\* Jerome says of the design of the hymn, "ut mysterium Trinitatis in una Divinitate demonstrent; et nequaquam templum Judaicum, sicut prius, sed omnem terram illius gloria plenam esse testentur."

† Chrys. Serm. vi. in Esaïam.

and Cyril,\* that the seraphic hymn was used in the churches of Antioch and Jerusalem, in the fourth century. In the same century, Gregory, bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia, speaks of it in the exarchate of Cæsarea, mentioning the six-winged seraphim, and the hymn being sung by Christians *with them*:† at the same period, Severianus of Gabala mentions it in the churches of Constantinople.‡ Origen, and Cyril of Alexandria, in the third and fifth centuries, allude to the seraphic hymn, as used in the patriarchate of Alexandria: in Gaul, it is mentioned by Hilary of Poitiers, Cæsarius of Arles, and Gregory of Tours, who inform us that it was sung by all the people: in Spain, Isidore of Seville speaks of it; and in Africa, we learn from Tertulian that it was customary in the second century. This hymn thus appears to have been in common use, in eastern and western Christendom, at a very early period; and was, probably, introduced under apostolic sanction in the primitive Christian assemblies.

This most ancient and universal of Christian hymns, was used by the early church in various ways: sometimes simply repeated by the people, without singing, but often chanted or sung. The

\* Cyrilli Opera, à Milles. p. 296.

† Gregorii Nyss. Opera, tom. i. p. 957.—“Eloquere nobiscum illa quæ *sex alas habentia seraphim*, cum perfectis Chrystianis dicunt *hymnos cœnientia*.” Paris. 1615.

‡ In a homily on the prodigal son, preached in Constantinople, which appears among the works of Chrysostom. Critics ascribe it to Severianus, to whom Chrysostom committed the care of the church of Constantinople during his own absence.

words which Isaiah describes as being sung by the angels, were not literally followed, additions and alterations being introduced in various parts of the Christian world. The following shows how the hymn now stands in the service of the Church of England, and how it was used at Antioch and Alexandria :—

## ENGLAND.

“Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of hosts: heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.”

## ANTIOCH.

“Πὰς ὁ λαὸς ἅμα εἰπάτο Ἅγιος, ἄγιος, ἄγιος, Κύριος Σαβαώθ· πλήρης ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.” \*

## ALEXANDRIA.

“Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt caeli et terra sanctitate gloriæ ejus.†”

At a later period the seraphic hymn was frequently used in connexion with the words repeated by the rejoicing multitude when the Redeemer entered Jerusalem: this was common at Constantinople, Cæsarea, Antioch, and Jerusalem; also in Italy, and in England previous to the revision of the liturgy in the reign of Edward VI.; it was then thought proper to omit this appendage, in accordance with the more ancient practice in Egypt and the east.

## CONSTANTINOPLE—CÆSAREA—JERUSALEM.

“Ἅγιος, ἄγιος, ἄγιος, Κύριος Σαβαώθ, πλήρης ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης σου. ὡσαννὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις. εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχομένος ἐν ὑνύματι Κυρίου. ὡσαννὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις.” ‡

\* Apost. Const. lib. viii. ed. Clerici.

† Liturg. Æthiop. Renaud. Liturg. tom. i.

‡ Goar Rituale Græc. p. 166.

## ANTIOCH.

"Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus es, Domine Deus fortis Sabaoth. Pleni sunt cœli et terra gloria et decore majestatis tuæ, Domine. Hosanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit et venturus est in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis."

## ROME.

"Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth. Pleni sunt cœli et terra gloria tua. Osanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis."

Various metrical versions of the seraphic hymn have been given to the church in modern times; and no congregation, in their formularies of praise, ought to be without this fragment of the hymnology of heaven. The thought of the heaven-born origin of the strain is animating to the pious mind, and strongly tends to awaken devotional feeling, while nothing can be a more proper subject for praise than the holiness of the Divine Being—an attribute with which every page of revelation carefully invests him—and which is expressly assigned as one reason why the gratulations of his creatures should be presented before his throne.—"Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool, for he is holy."\* From the pen of Bishop Heber, and in the Wesleyan collection, we have spirited and beautiful amplifications of the seraphic song, viewed in connexion with the doxology in the Apocalypse.†

## HEBER.

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.  
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!  
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

\* Ps. xcix. 5.

† Rev. iv. 8.

- " Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore thee,  
 Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
 Cherubim and seraphim, falling down before thee,  
 Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.
- " Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide thee,  
 Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see;  
 Only thou art holy : there is none beside thee,  
 Perfect in power, in love, and purity.
- " Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
 All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea.  
 Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!  
 God in three persons, blessed Trinity!"

## WESLEY.

- " Hail! holy, holy, holy Lord!  
 Whom One in Three we know;  
 By all thy heavenly host adored,  
 By all thy church below.
- " One undivided Trinity,  
 With triumph we proclaim;  
 Thy universe is full of thee,  
 And speaks thy glorious name.
- " Thee, Holy Father, we confess;  
 Thee, Holy Son, adore;  
 Thee, Spirit of Truth and Holiness,  
 We worship evermore.
- " The incommunicable right,  
 Almighty God! receive;  
 Which angel choirs, and saints in light,  
 And saints embodied, give.
- " Three Persons equally divine,  
 We magnify and love;  
 And both the choirs ere long shall join,  
 To sing thy praise above.
- " Hail! holy, holy, holy Lord,  
 Our heavenly song shall be.  
 Supremely, essential One, ador'd  
 In co-eternal Three

## GLORIA IN EXCELSIS—THE ANGELIC HYMN.

The shepherds who were abiding in the fields of Bethlehem, on the night that the Saviour was born, heard a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:—

“Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, goodwill, to men.”\*

In the eastern church this hymn was certainly used in the commencement of the fourth century, as it is mentioned by Athanasius. The Greeks, in general, called it “the great doxology,” ἡ μεγάλη δοξολογία. That particular arrangement of it which, with slight differences, became common throughout eastern and western Christendom, has been attributed to Telesphorus, bishop of Rome, A.D. 150,—to Symmachus, bishop of the same see, A.D. 500,—and to Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, in the fourth century. Its author, and the date of its introduction, are, however, equally uncertain, but a very high antiquity must be assigned to its use. It occurs as follows:—

“Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, goodwill towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.”

“Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax, hominibus bonæ voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te, gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam, Domine Deus, Rex cœlestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.”

The songs of Elizabeth, of Mary, and of Zacharias,† were also in common use at an early period;

\* Luke ii. 13, 14.

† Luke i.



and the "hymn of victory"—"Great and marvellous are thy works."\* To these short, yet splendid, specimens of sacred song, the Alleluia was generally added as an accompaniment.† Sidonius Appollinaris, bishop of Clermont, A.D. 472, relates that it was frequently sung by the boatmen on the Soane. To the Christian, hunted from city to city by an infuriated priesthood, the thrilling episodes of the Apocalypse would be singularly appropriate; and many, doubtless, trod the thorny path of martyrdom, like Paul and Silas in their dungeon, glorifying their exalted Saviour in the language of the elders before the throne. At the close of the first century, or the commencement of the second, Pliny relates that the Christians met together on a stated day, before it was light, "to sing a hymn to Christ as God." Tertullian, in the third century, speaks of singing psalms as a part of the public worship of the church; and Origen, a little later, speaks of singing psalms and hymns to the Father in Christ, in melody metre and vocal concert. It was common, also, with many, in their household devotions, in seasons of outward tribulation, or inward conflict, to give expression to their feelings, and to seek to strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees, by having recourse to the melody of sacred song; and hence Tertullian refers to the practice of private singing in the family, as an argument why Christians should marry among

\* Rev. xv. 3.

† Rev. xix. 6.

themselves, in order to perform the duty more harmoniously.

But, though the first hymns of the christian church were taken from the sacred volume, it is certain that uninspired productions were used in the public services in the second century. Several of the fathers sought to edify their flocks, and aid their devotions, by their compositions; and instances are referred to, by Eusebius, of private individuals composing hymns. Speaking of the mode of administering the Lord's supper, Tertullian remarks in his Apology: "After water is brought for the hands, and lights, we are invited to sing to God, according as each one can propose a subject from the holy Scriptures, or of his *own composing*." In the west, Hilary, of Poitiers, presented his church with a collection of hymns;\* and the Milanese Christians, about the same period, were accustomed to assemble at night, to chant those composed by their bishop, Ambrose. The Morning Hymn of the former, and the Evening Hymn of the latter, are simple and pleasing compositions. Augustine describes the effect produced upon him by the Milan psalmody:—"The hymns and songs of the church moved my soul intensely; the truth was distilled by them into my heart; the flame of piety was kindled, and my tears flowed for joy. This practice of singing had been of no long standing at Milan. It began about the year when

\* Hilary's Hymns were printed at Paris, 4to, 1480.

Justina persecuted Ambrose. The pious people watched in the church, prepared to die with their pastor. There my mother sustained an eminent part in watching and praying. Then hymns and psalms, after the manner of the east, were sung, with a view of preserving the people from weariness; and thence the custom has spread through Christian churches."\*

Of the hymnic treasures of the eastern church, during the early ages, no specimens have come down to us, with the exception of some verses appended, upon doubtful authority, to the works of Clemens Alexandrinus. During the episcopate of Chrysostom at Constantinople, the Arians and the orthodox composed hymns, suited to their respective creeds, and sung them in the streets of the city. Gregory Nazianzen, in his first *Letter to Cledonius against Apollinarius*, accuses the heretics of introducing psalms and hymns of their own, as if they were a new revelation; and hints that none such should be received into public worship, for fear of errors in belief slipping in and being thus sanctioned. This father was a poet, and has left behind him many favourable specimens of his powers, though it does not appear that he wrote for the public services of the church. The annexed fragment is from his Hymn to the Deity:†-

"Thee, deathless Monarch of the sky,  
My soul aspires to glorify:  
Grant me in living verse to sing  
Th' eternal Lord, th' Almighty King.

\* Conf. lib. ix.

† Boyd's Trans.

For thee, the tide of praise is roll'd;  
 The seraphs strike their chords of gold,  
 And wake the anthem, soaring high  
 With Inspiration's ecstasy;  
 While angels, quicken'd by thy glance,  
 Circle the throne in mystic dance.  
 For thee, th' unceasing ages roll,  
 Exulting in their Lord's control.  
 At thy command the heaven's expansion  
 Became the golden stars' fair mansion;  
 Flamed high the sun in glory bright,  
 Look'd forth the moon with softer light:  
 And born thy wondrous works to scan,  
 And trace the mind which formed the plan,  
 Uprose thy reasoning creature, man.  
 Thou, O my God, createdst all,  
 The highest heaven, this earthly ball;  
 Within thy breast the whole designing;  
 By thy sole power each part combining:  
 At thy command the work's begun!  
 At thy command the work is done!

" Jesus I hail, the Word Divine,  
 In whom his Father's glories shine;  
 By nature equal, God supreme,  
 Of angels and of men the theme;  
 By whom dim chaos back was driven,  
 When through the void, the expanse of heaven  
 He spread, and framed our earthly ball,  
 That he might rule, the Lord of all.  
 His Holy Spirit I adore,  
 Th' embryo deep, who brooded o'er,  
 And still with kind parental care,  
 Inspires and aids the humble prayer.  
 Tremendous Power! I hail in thee,  
 A true and living Trinity!"

That truly magnificent composition, the *Te Deum*, goes back to a very early date. Allusions to its existence are found in the Rule of Cæsarius, bishop of Arles, who lived in the fifth century, and in that of his successor, Aurelian. Formerly it was ascribed to Hilary; but, by the general consent of the learned, it is now assigned to some unknown

member of the Gallic church, probably in the fourth century. In the ancient offices of the English church, it is called the "Song of Ambrose and Augustine;" but neither of these fathers have the slightest claim to its authorship. Nothing can be conceived more sublime than the opening of this fine production:—

- " We praise thee, O God : we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
- " All the earth doth worship thee : the Father everlasting.
- " To thee all angels cry aloud : the heavens, and all the powers therein.
- " To thee cherubim and seraphim : continually do cry.
- " Holy, holy, holy : Lord God of Sabaoth :
- " Heaven and earth are full of the majesty : of thy glory.
- " The glorious company of the apostles : praise thee.
- " The goodly fellowship of the prophets : praise thee.
- " The noble army of martyrs : praise thee."
- " Te Deum laudamus : te dominum confitemur.
- " Te æternum Patrem : omnis terra veneratur.
- " Tibi omnes angeli : tibi cœli et universæ potestates.
- " Tibi cherubin et seraphin : incessabili voce proclamant.
- " Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus : Dominus Deus Sabaoth :
- " Pleni sunt cœli et terra : majestatis gloriæ tuæ.
- " Te gloriosus apostolorum chorus.
- " Te prophetarum laudabilis numerus.
- " Te martyrum candidatus : laudat exercitus." \*

As we advance into the middle ages, hymns multiply upon us in abundance. The monastic clergy sought to maintain their hold upon the prejudices and affections of the people, by imposing devotional services. "The monasteries were schools of devotional music; and many times during the day the

\* An eloquent passage in Cyprian, exhorting us to fix our affections and desires on heaven, probably suggested this, "De Mortalitate," p. 166.

"Qualis illic cœlestium regnorum voluptas, sine timore moriendi, et cum æternitate vivendi! Quam summa et perpetua felicitas! *Illic apostolorum gloriosus chorus: illic prophetarum exultantium numerus: illic martyrum innumerabilis populus ob certaminis et passionis victoriam coronatus.*"

voices of the choir were heard swelling from the neighbouring abbey, 'over some wide-watered shore.' The labourer, as he woke with the sun to his accustomed toil ; or, as in southern climates, he reposed from the heat of the burning noon ; or, as he lingered weary on his return at evening to his dwelling ; the traveller at midnight ;—all were reminded of their heavenly Father and Redeemer, by the solemn strain of the organ from the commanding minster, or the sweeter and gentler voices which pealed from the chapel of the convent." A fragment of a ballad, composed by Canute, the Dane, as he was sailing by the Abbey of Ely, shows us the monks practising psalmody.

*" Merie sungen the muneches binnen Ely,  
Tha Cnug ching reuther by ;  
Rowed, Cinzes, noer the land,  
And here thes muneches sang."*

*" Merry sung the monks in Ely,  
When Canute, the king, was sailing by ;  
' Row, ye knights, near the land,  
And let us hear these monks' song.'"*

But the language of the choristers was an unknown tongue to the people at large ; they listened to words the meaning of which they had not the ability to comprehend ; and hence, though the strain might fascinate the ear, and awe the superstitious mind, it had no power to communicate religious knowledge, or excite devotional feeling.\* Yet there

\* In the canons of Egbert, A.D. 740, there is the following curious argument in favour of singing in an unknown tongue:—

" Psalmody is a divine work, a great cure in many cases for the souls of those who do it in spirit and in mind. But they that sing with the

is a sweet simplicity and rugged grandeur about some of the old monkish verses, however grating Leonine rhyme may be to a classical ear. A few specimens of the Latin hymns of the middle ages are subjoined, some of which are now in use in the Catholic church.

The annexed stanzas are from a hymn for the feast of Corpus Christi, a composition of St. Thomas Aquinas.

"Lauda, Sion, salvatorem,  
Lauda, ducem et pastorem,  
In hymnis et canticis;  
Quantum potes, tantum aude,  
Quia major omni laude,  
Nec laudare sufficis.

"Bone pastor, panis vere,  
Jesu, nostri miserere,  
Tu, nos parce, nos tuere,  
Tu nos bona fac videre  
In terra viventium.

"Tu qui cuncta scis, et vales,  
Qui nos pascis hic mortales.  
Tuos ibi commensales,  
Cohæredes et sodales,  
Fac sanctorum civium."

---

"With joyous hymns, O Sion, sing  
Thy Saviour, Shepherd, Guide, and King;  
To themes like this, to day, belong  
The chiefest praise of sacred song,  
Too weak, though all its skill be spent  
On this stupendous argument !

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voice, without the inward meaning, may make the sound resemble something: therefore though a man *knows not the Latin words that are sung*, yet he may devoutly apply the intention of his own heart to the things which are at present to be asked of God, and fix them there to the best of his power."

"Jesu! good Shepherd, living bread,  
Pity, protect us, watch and lead;  
And stretch forth thy forgiving hand,  
To guide us to thy promised land.

"Thou by whose grace all good is sent,  
Omniscient and Omnipotent;  
When life and all its pangs are past,  
Oh, let us join thy saints at last:  
To us their fellow guests be given,  
A joint inheritance in heaven."

The next is a hymn, by Drexelius, the Jesuit, and is found in several Roman Catholic books of devotion:—

#### DE AMORE JESUS.

"Jesu clemens, pie Deus!  
Jesu dulcis amor meus!  
Jesu bone, Jesu pie,  
Fili Dei et Mariæ.

"Quisnam possit enarrare,  
Quam jucundum te amare,  
Tecum fide sociari,  
Tecum semper delectari.

"Fac ut possim demonstrare  
Quam sit dulce te amare;  
Tecum pati, tecum flere,  
Tecum semper congaudere.

"O Majestas infinita,  
Amor noster, spes, et vita,  
Fac nos dignos te videre,  
Tecum semper permanere.

"Ut videntes et fruentes,  
Jubilemus et cantemus,  
In beati cœli vita,  
Amen! Jesu, fiat ita."

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#### THE LOVE OF JESUS.

'Jesu, meek and holy King!  
Jesu, thy loved name I sing!  
Jesu holy, Jesu mild,  
God's own Son, and Mary's child.



" Blest—how blessed, none can tell!  
 Those, with Thee, in love who dwell;—  
 Thine by faith, for aye, they see  
 Ever new delights in Thee.

" Give, oh ! give this heart to prove,  
 Loved of thee, how sweet to love;  
 Sweet with Thee the cross to bear,  
 Sweet the crown with Thee to wear.

" Boundless Majesty divine,  
 My hope, my life ; oh, make me thine ;  
 Make me worthy Thee to see,  
 That, where Thou art, I may be.

" Then thy praises, Heavenly King,  
 I beholding Thee shall sing ;  
 And vision beatific know,  
 Amen ! Jesu, be it so."

The celebrated dirge, "In Commemoration of all the Faithful departed," is a truly sublime composition : there is nothing in Protestant hymnology which can compete with it. The commencement only is given :—

" Dies iræ, dies illa,  
 Crucis expandens vexilla,  
 Solvet seculum in favilla !

" Quantus tremor est futurus,  
 Quando Judex est venturus,  
 Cuncta stricte discussurus. |

" Tuba mirum spargens sonum,  
 Per sepulchra regionum,  
 Coget omnes ante thronum. |

" Mors stupebit, et natura,  
 Cum resurget creatura,  
 Judicanti responsura.

" Liber scriptus proferetur,  
In quo totum continetur,  
Unde mundus judicetur.

" Judex ergo cum sedebit,  
Quidquid latet apparebit,  
Nil inultum remanebit.

" Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?  
Quem patronum rogaturus,  
Cum vix justus sit securus?

" Rex tremendæ majestatis,  
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,  
Salva me, Fons pietatis."

---

" Day of wrath!—that awful day,  
Shall the banner'd cross display,  
Earth in ashes melt away.

" The trembling, the agony,  
When his coming shall be nigh,  
Who shall all things judge and try!

" When the trumpet's thrilling tone,  
Through the tombs of ages gone,  
Summons all before the throne.

" Death and time shall stand aghast,  
And creation, at the blast,  
Rise to answer for the past.

" Then the volume shall be spread,  
And the writing shall be read,  
Which shall judge the quick and dead!

" Then the Judge shall sit!—oh! then,  
All that's hid shall be made plain,  
Unrequited nought remain.

" What shall wretched I then plead?  
Who for me shall intercede,  
When the righteous scarce is freed?

" King of dreadful majesty,  
Saving souls in mercy free,  
Fount of Pity, save thou me."

At the Reformation, a new era in the history of psalmody commenced: the protestant leaders at once threw off the bondage of antiquated Latin rhyme, and taught the common people in their own vernacular tongue, to sing the wonderful works of God. The sagacity of the Reformers soon discovered the potent influence of verse upon the lower orders of society; and those who had a poetical turn, composed hymns, which were chanted by their followers in their religious assemblies, in the streets of the German cities, and by the way-side. Metrical versions of the psalms appeared on the continent, and were adopted by Calvin, in his own congregation at Geneva. In England, the well-known version of Sternhold was printed in 1562, and attached to the book of Common Prayer: since that period a host of labourers have appeared in the vineyard of sacred song, and David's Psalms have been arranged in almost every kind of metre.

The propriety of introducing the psalmical compositions of the Jews into christian worship, has been disputed, on the ground that it is preferring the "veil of Moses," to the clearer discoveries of the latter days. But it is evident, that besides the literal or primary meaning of the psalms, a considerable number are susceptible of the double sense—that they were originally composed and sung as "shadows of good things to come;" and upon this principle the objection referred to falls to the ground. It is difficult to conceive that the Jews would have adopted them into their daily worship,

would have given them such prominence in their public devotions, or that their authors would have delivered them to the church for such a purpose, had not their typical character been distinctly understood on both sides. Congregations are not, however, adepts in theology; and hence, if the productions of the inspired psalmists are to be sung by them, the New Testament interpretation of typical expressions should be given, and the evangelic sense made plain to the simplest understanding. This was the plan pursued by Dr. Watts, in his metrical version, the best upon the whole which has yet been executed. The application of the psalms in this manner in christian worship, gives them an advantage over any fresh compositions, however skilfully executed: they keep alive in our remembrance the deliverances of ancient days, and the mercies of former times,—they illustrate the progressive history of the church, and the connexion between the old and the new dispensation,—they advance the experience of the past to guide the conduct and correct the errors of the present,—and they tend to increase our faith, to confirm our confidence, and excite our hopes, by bringing before us what our “fathers” tell, the “elders” teach, and the “years of many generations” testify.

But though the psalms may appropriately be introduced into christian sanctuaries, there does not seem much propriety in admitting them indiscriminately, as has generally been done, into our religious services. The authors of most of our

metrical versions have, however, proceeded upon the assumption that the Psalter was the hymn-book of the Jewish church,—a most erroneous idea. The didactic poems are not appropriate for praise. There is, for instance, the first psalm, supposed to have been prefixed to the collection by Ezra: it is an extremely elegant didactic poem, but obviously not a song of praise. The same may be said of the 119th psalm: its beautiful ethic rules, and forcible admonitions, render it totally unsuitable for the choir service. The elegiac psalms are also only fitted for the closet; it is those that are general, that are applicable to the majority that should be introduced in public. The contrition of the lapsed and penitent monarch for his awful crime,—the sorrow of his over-burdened heart, when driven from his royal city, and hunted on the mountains,—the weight of anguish he felt on account of the treachery of his friend and minister,—all these varied emotions are expressed in beautiful and unrivalled poems, but they are only fit for individual use,—they are foreign to the local interests and circumstances of the solemn assembly.

Within the last century hymnists have abounded, and to some of them the church is under lasting obligations, for having consecrated their talents to furnish the sanctuary and the oratory with the songs of Zion. To Milton we are indebted for a few versions of the psalms, which are, however, unworthy of his fame: from Bishop Kenn we have received three immortal hymns: four more were furnished

by Addison, which shine among the brightest stars in the hemisphere of devotion. The names of Watts and Wesley stand, however, pre-eminent among the psalmists of the modern Israel, having brought to their sacred task the inspiration of the poet and the devotion of the saint. Cowper, Doddridge, Toplady, Beddome, Heber, and Montgomery, have since trod in their steps, and given valuable contributions to the treasury of sacred song. Not until the final day will it be known the amount of good of which they are the authors, who furnish the lips of piety with the words of praise. They became instruments in the hands of God of improving the religious experience, and increasing the spiritual enjoyments of his people, rousing their deadened affections, prompting the longings of desire, and calling back, by the "voice of music," and the gushing of "sweet sound," many a wandering sheep to the fold of his heavenly Father and Redeemer. When the syrens of heathen mythology warbled their soft and seducing airs to draw the heedless into the gulf of unholy pleasure, some overcame the temptation by chanting divine hymns. The moral of the fable is correct and apposite; for, in the experience of many, the evil spirit has not only been dispossessed, but his enticements resisted, when melody has been made with heart and lip unto the Lord.

## MODES OF PRAISE.

In the Jewish church, the practice of alternate singing prevailed from the earliest periods of its history: Miriam, and her attendants, responded to the song of Moses, upon the passage of the Red Sea. The temple choir was divided into twenty-four courses; and each band of singers took up the strain in its turn, and thus answered alternately to each other. For instance: when one party began the Psalm thus—"Sing unto the Lord a new song," the corresponding versicle was taken up by the chorus, or semi-chorus—"Sing unto the Lord, all the earth:" the one band proceeded—"Sing unto the Lord, and bless his name;" the other replied—"Shew forth his salvation from day to day." The musical poetry of the Jews became thus divided into a succession of strophes and antistrophes, corresponding to each other—a method of composition which, becoming familiar, insensibly spread from their hymns to their other poetical writings. At an early period the mode of alternate singing was introduced into the christian church: it was practised in the cathedral of Milan, in the time of Ambrose, who compares the voice of the multitude, as they took up the response, to that of many waters.\* The people were, however, gradually deprived of any participation in this part of the public service, which became exclusively the business of the choir; and the antiphonal manner of

\* "*Responsoriis psalmodum, cantu virorum, mulierum, virginum, parvulorum, consonans undarum fragor resultat.*"—Hexam. lib. iii. c. 5.

singing became general, in which one half of the choir repeated verse for verse after the other. A high authority was pleaded for this practice; for the ecclesiastical historian Socrates reports that the martyr Ignatius was favoured with a vision of the heavenly world, and heard the angels, in the antiphonal manner, celebrating the praises of the Trinity.\* A more satisfactory sanction might have been found in the splendid interview of Isaiah with the "bright seraphim" in the temple, when they sung "one unto another" the praises of "Jehovah of Hosts."

During the four first centuries, the customs of psalmody varied in different parts of the Christian world. Sometimes the psalms were sung by one person alone; sometimes the whole assembly joined together, men, women, and children—the most ancient and general practice; and sometimes a single person began the verse, and the people joined with him in the close. The management of the voice in singing also varied considerably: the plain song, or only a gentle inflexion, similar to the chanting in our cathedrals, was adopted in some places; and the artificial song, or regular musical composition, like our modern anthems, in others. According to the Institutes of Cassian, in some congregations one person only stood up and repeated the psalm, the others listening in silence.† In the church of Alexandria, in the time of

\* Soerates, *Hist. Eccles. lib. vi. c. 8.*

† Cassian, *Instit. ii. 12.*



Athanasius, the reader spoke the psalm with a slight flexure of the voice: in the church of Hippo it was sung with some accompaniments; but Augustine was dissatisfied with the plan, and wished to adopt the Alexandrian method. The African father was in great perplexity, between his fear of indulging too much in the carnal delight of music, and his recollection that his devotional feelings had been most powerfully excited by the influence of religious song. This appears from the following interesting passage in his Confessions: after referring to the pleasures of the eye, and their influence upon him, he says:—

“The pleasures of the ear have deeper hold upon me. I find, even when I am charmed with sacred melody, I am led astray at times by the luxury of sensations, and offend, not knowing at the time, but afterwards I discover it. Sometimes, guarding against this fallacy, I err in the other extreme, and could wish all the melody of David’s psalms were removed from my ears and those of the church; and think it safer to imitate the plan of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, *who directed a method of repeating the psalms, more resembling pronunciation than music.*\* But when I remember my tears of affection at my conversion, under the melody of thy church, with which I am still affected, I again acknowledge the utility of the custom. Thus do I fluctuate between the danger of pleasure and the

\* “Tam modico flexu vocis faciebat sonare lectorem psalmi, ut pronuncianti vicinior esset quam canenti.”

experience of utility ; and am more induced, though with a wavering assent, to own that the infirmity of nature may be assisted in devotion by psalmody. Yet when the tune has moved me more than the subject, I feel guilty, and am ready to wish I had not heard the music.”\*

The use of instrumental music in offering public praise, is almost as ancient as the composition of hymns. The first psalm of which we read, that celebrating the escape of Israel from Pharaoh, was sung to a timbrel ; and afterwards, in Jerusalem, when the temple was built, musical instruments were constantly used, by Divine appointment, in the public services.

“ Sing aloud unto God, our strength ;  
 Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob !  
 Take psalms, strike the timbrel,  
 The pleasant harp with the psaltery.  
 Blow the trumpet in the new moon,  
 On the solemn day of our feast.  
*For this is a custom in Israel ;  
 A law of the God of Jacob,  
 Which he ordained for a testimony in Joseph,  
 When he came out of the land of Egypt.*”†

The silver trumpets were ordered to be sounded, on the solemn day, over the burnt-offerings ; and many instruments were added by David to the Jewish ritual. In his time there were three masters who presided over the band of music ; and, at their head, one chief musician, or master of the whole choir. That females were admitted into the temple

\* August. Conf. x.

† Ps. lxxxi.

choir, is strenuously denied by the Jewish writers; but the case of the three daughters of Heman, who were "for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals," makes it evident that women were thus employed. This part of their devotional service the Jews usually performed in a standing posture. "The Levites stood with the instruments of David"—a practice which has been followed in most Christian congregations. The principal instruments employed were the *chatsothseroth*, or silver trumpets; the *shophor*, or cornet; and the *toph*, or timbrel; the two first expressly enjoined by the Mosaic ritual: afterwards were introduced, by Divine direction, chiefly in the time of David, the *kinnor*, or harp; the *nablum*, or psaltery; and the *tseltsel*, or cymbal. When Hezekiah restored the temple service, which had been neglected during his predecessor's reign, "he set the Levites in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the Lord, by his prophets."\* The choir service was suited to the genius of Judaism—a religion full of splendid external rites; and it must have been an imposing and overpowering spectacle, when "the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound in praising and thanking the Lord;" the cloud of glory filled the house—a sight only inferior to the

\* 2 Chron. xxix. 25.

“hundred forty and four thousand,” “on Mount Sion,” “harping with their harps.”

The disciples of Pythagoras resorted to instrumental music early in the morning, to dissipate the dulness of the mind; but the ancient fathers regarded it as a typical Jewish institute, abrogated by the gospel, and tending rather to captivate the senses than to suitably dispose the soul—to divert the attention from the words to the sound. Both Basil, and Clement of Alexandria, speak expressly against the use of musical instruments, as the “invention of Jubal of the race of Cain,” and as “far better for beasts than for men.” But “if music,” says Bishop Horne, “in the Jewish church, served to enliven devotion and elevate the affections, why should it not be used to produce the same effect among Christians? Human nature is the same, and the power of music is the same: why should there not be the same application of one to the other, for the same beneficial end, under both dispensations? Vocal music ceased not with the law: why should we suppose that instrumental music was abrogated with it?” Where instruments are not introduced for the mere purpose of parade and show—where they do not usurp an undue place in the service, but are employed to direct and assist the voice—their use in the public congregation seems not only innocent, but beneficial; preventing confusion, and blending the different intonations of the assembly into one volume of harmonious sound. That the mind is agreeably affected by certain combinations

of sound, is a matter of universal experience; nor is it doubtful that suitable melodies have a tendency to dispose it to devotional feeling and impression: the art, then, of producing the desired harmony, is not unworthy of consideration; and with this end in view, we are not more disposed to object to the notes of an organ than to the rhythm of a hymn.

But whether instrumental be joined with vocal music in praise, or not, care should be taken that the air be one in which the whole congregation can unite. If this is not the case—if difficult and complex musical compositions are introduced, to which only the professional singer is adequate, the service ceases to be a sacrifice of praise, and becomes a mere scientific display. This was a vice introduced into the church soon after the fourth century, and from which the Establishment in our land is by no means free. Simple melody was succeeded, in the first instance, by the light airs of the Greek and Roman theatre; abstruse harmonical proportion was then studied, and gradually took possession of nearly the whole service; for not only the psalmodical but the supplicatory parts, with the appointed epistle and gospel, were sung, not in mere intonation or chant, but in elaborate canon. In the twelfth century, and with little alteration till the Reformation, the church music was extremely intricate: the composers seem to have bidden defiance to syllabic order and metrical arrangement, rendering the terms meant to be

expressed unintelligible, by each part enouncing different words at the same time. "The kind of music," says Erasmus, "introduced into divine worship, is such that we are not able to understand distinctly, nor have those who sing it leisure to attend to what they sing; the tinkle of the words is all that strikes the ears, and soothes them with a transient and slightly-pleasurable sensation; with this they are so much delighted, that the monks do nothing else, especially among the Britons."\* At the Reformation, however, the mode of conducting this part of the public service was amended. The royal commission to reform the ecclesiastical law, appointed in the reign of Henry VIII., and executed in the days of his son, condemned the old choral mode of worship; and the leading reformers at once abandoned it for congregational psalmody. Elizabeth, indeed, whose hatred of puritanism, and prejudices in favour of the renounced religion, were strong, continued to patronize the cathedral music; but the psalmodical was not interdicted, and it was speedily introduced into most churches. The new morning prayer began at St. Antholin's, London, when a psalm was sung in the Geneva fashion, all the congregation, men, women, and boys, singing together. Bishop Jewel remarks, that "the singing of psalms, begun in one church in London, did quickly spread itself, not only through the city but in the neighbouring places; sometimes, at Paul's

\* *Erasmi Annot. in xiv. cap. 19, v. 1. Ep. Corinth.*

Cross, six thousand people singing together." The first instance, however, in our country, on record, is undoubtedly the following, during the reign of Edward VI. :—"On March 15, 1550, M. Vernon, a Frenchman by birth, but a learned Protestant, and parson of St. Martin's, Ludgate, preached at St. Paul's Cross, before the mayor and aldermen; and after sermon done, they all sang in common a psalm in metre, as it seems now was frequently done, the custom being brought to us from abroad by the exiles."\* The practice of the primitive church was thus revived; the people were, as Secker expresses it, "restored to their rights," and taught to sing, as well as to pray, "not with the heart only, but with the understanding also."

It has been doubted by some, whether we are right in admitting supplication into our hymns—whether they ought not to be rigidly confined to the praise and glory of God. The practice of the Jewish church seems to favour the opinion; and that of the early Christian, as far as it can be ascertained. Gregory of Nyssa defines a hymn, "a thanksgiving offered to God for the blessings we enjoy:"† and it is important to notice, that in all the passages in the apostolic writings in which psalmody is mentioned, it is invariably connected with thanksgiving. Perhaps it would be going too far to say that supplication should never be introduced in our hymns; but, undoubtedly, praise should

\* Nichols's Progress of Queen Elizabeth, vol. i. p. 54.

† In Psalm xi.

be their prevailing and predominant character. Some have again pleaded for literal transcripts from the psalmical parts of Scripture being used in our public services,—discarding all human compositions, and employing only inspired ones. But this proposition is obviously open to strong objections: there would be no harmony between the various parts of the service; for while our praises would constantly be in accordance with an inferior economy, our prayers and preaching would recognise the increased light of the gospel dispensation. Still, however, remembering the inspired source of the Jewish psalms—how “holy men of God spake” them “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”—remembering also the use made of them by the ancient church, we should be glad to have them introduced, occasionally, in their native dress. Their force and pathos are completely ruined by being tortured into rhyme—a process which our modern mode of singing renders necessary. But the practice of our Lord at the last supper, and that of the primitive church, might with advantage be restored with reference to them,—that of chanting or repeating them with some slight inflexion of the voice, in which a congregation might easily accompany a practised leader. The 103d and 104th Psalms, with many others, are admirably adapted for this purpose. The Protestants of England have never paid that attention to psalmody which its importance demands, and are far behind the reformed churches on the continent, in their proficiency in the art of sacred



song. The German hymnology is said to possess upwards of eighty thousand compositions, whereas we can scarcely number four thousand. In Switzerland, meetings for the special purpose of praise are commonly held; and schools, where the science of song is taught, have been opened under the direction of M. Kaupert.

But it is not to the mere expressions of the lip, however harmoniously modulated, that Jehovah has the hearing ear and the approving look; it is when there are corresponding dispositions of mind—when the music of the tongue is accompanied with the melody of the heart, that “praise is comely” in his sight. To “serve God acceptably” in the engagement, the soul should charge itself with a recollection of his mercies,—call them up from the oblivion of by-gone days, and keep in mind a deep sense of its own unworthiness. When praise thus springs from principles of humility, faith, and gratitude in the heart, it is not only a “sacrifice with which God is well pleased,” but one which is useful to the worshipper, bringing upon his affections the sanctifying and comforting influences of grace.

“ All that have a care to walk with God, fill their vessels more largely as soon as they rise, before they begin the work of the day, and before they lie down again at night ; which is to observe what the Lord appointed in the Levitical ministry, a morning and an evening lamb to be laid upon the altar ; so that with them that are not stark irreligious, **PRAYER IS THE KEY TO OPEN THE DAY, AND THE BOLT TO SHUT IN THE NIGHT.** But as the skies drop the early dew and the evening dew upon the grass, yet it would not spring and grow green by that constant and double falling of the dew, unless some great showers at certain seasons did supply the rest ; so the customary devotion of prayer twice a day is the falling of the early and latter dew ; but if you will increase and flourish in the works of grace, empty the great clouds sometimes, and let them fall into a full shower of prayer. Choose out the seasons in your own discretion, when prayer shall overflow like Jordan in the time of harvest.”—*Jeremy Taylor's Christian Consolations.*

## CHAPTER IX.

### MORNING AND EVENING DEVOTION.

TRAVELLERS describe with enthusiasm the prospect from the summit of Mount *Ætna* at sunrise, when the atmosphere is propitious. Elevated to the height of ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, the range of view is prodigious: the lovely island, associated with the thought of its ancient poets, philosophers, and historians—its architectural renown—the unrivalled beauty of its landscapes—its never-failing fertility—the sea that girds it glowing beneath the rays of the ascending luminary as far as the visible horizon extends—all unite to form a scene which captivates the cultivated mind, and startles even the dull gaze of rustic ignorance. There is indeed a powerful charm in the hours of sunrise, when connected with no such appendages as those that attend it on the summit of the Sicilian volcano: it dresses up with peculiar grace and attractiveness the most tame and monotonous of nature's features; and even in our own northern latitude, the summer's daylight often pours its effulgence upon hill and valley, with a

prodigality of splendour, which rivets the attention of the lovers of the bright and beautiful.

“Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet  
With charms of earliest birds : pleasant the sun  
When first on this delightful land he spreads  
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,  
Glist’ning with dew.”

At such a period, the external world will not only minister to the sensorial gratification of a good man, but stimulate his devotional feelings,—forming, as it does, a visible demonstration of the Divine power and wisdom : the sanctified mind will associate the Creator with the created, and be prompted to admiration, reverence, and gratitude towards Him who has surrounded us with so many visual glories, and who has so nicely adapted the laws of the universe to the welfare and comfort of his creatures. There is sound philosophy, as well as true religion, in the words of Handel’s fine air :—

“What though I trace each herb and flower  
That drinks the morning dew ;  
Did I not own Jehovah’s power,  
How vain were all I knew !”

“In the morning sow thy seed,” is the maxim of the Jewish moralist ; literally interpreted, it means that he who would be a successful agriculturist must be early and diligent in his labours ; spiritually explained, it intimates that as religion is the most important concern of life, its duties should have precedence of the affairs of time.

An example of early morning devotion has been left us by the Saviour : “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and

departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”\* Peculiarly favourable is such a season for devotional engagements; with recruited physical energy, with a mind undissipated with the concerns of the world, we are in a state, as far as relates to external circumstances, most fitted for the private services of piety; and, as eagerly as the mariner spreads his canvass to catch every favourable gale, so should we avail ourselves of a period which is so friendly to intercourse with Heaven.

“Principally,” says Chrysostom, “it behoves us to call upon God when our soul is tranquil and serene, when our thoughts are collected, in quiet and silence; when our memory is clear, and we can condemn ourselves. In the day-time, thought is expelled by tumult and by anxious cares and solitudes. Some interval then is necessary to calmness and quiet, that we may collect ourselves and remember our Creator. Since ye are ever perplexed and distracted amid those things which relate to this life at least, ye should be mindful of God and call upon him in the morning. If in the morning we thus direct our meditations, we can proceed to our business with all security. If by prayer and supplication we shall first have made God propitious to us, proceeding thus, we shall have no enemy; or if thou hast an enemy, thou shalt laugh him to scorn, having God for thy succour and support. War

\* Mark i. 35.

awaits us in the streets; battles and nothing else, are the daily affairs which we are engaged in; waves, tempests, have we to contend with. We therefore need to be supplied with weapons and armour; and the best of arms are prayers.”\*

Though the instance of early rising, in the life of the Saviour, adverted to in the passage just cited, was probably owing to some extraordinary cause, yet, as a Jew, he doubtless conformed to the general practice of his countrymen, which was to rise with the sun. He redeemed the time: he had no seasons of inaction beyond those which nature demanded; he seized every available moment to improve it to the best advantage. His life was one of strenuous endeavours, of unwearied persevering exertion, to answer the great purpose for which he had become incarnate, and to accomplish fully the important mission upon which he had been sent. In this particular, we are frequently called upon to be followers of Him, to imitate his zeal, his laboriousness, his spiritual wisdom, giving our first attention to that which is most worthy of it—the moral improvement of our souls. For this purpose, no more time should be spent in sleep than what the physical and mental constitution demand; and before embarking daily upon the troubled waters of active life, care should be taken to seek the guidance and protection of Him who can preserve us from injury in every storm, and overrule for good every adverse wind and wave.

\* Chrys. in Epist. ad Hebræos.

The Orientals, owing to the temperature of their climate, are accustomed to rise at an earlier hour than what is common in colder regions. Jacob, after his vision of the mystic ladder and its attendant angels, during his slumbers at Bethel, “rose up early in the morning,” and performed his devotions;\* Moses also, after his splendid interview with Jehovah on Sinai, “rose early in the morning,” and built an altar under the hill, upon which he offered sacrifice.† The same fact is frequently mentioned with reference to Joshua,‡ Samuel,§ and David.|| It is said of Darius, that he “arose very early in the morning, and went in haste,” to ascertain the fate of Daniel.¶ The female followers of our Lord visited his deserted sepulchre on the morning of the third day after his decease, “as it began to dawn.”\*\* These were peculiar cases, but the general habit of the Jews was to rise with the first break of day.

By the pious of the ancient Church, the commencement of each day was consecrated to the service of God, and spent in offering sacrifice upon the altar, and presenting praise and prayer to Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Job, after the festivities in which his children had indulged, “rose up early in the morning,” and offered burnt offerings for them; and that this was not an occasional act of patriarchal piety, but an habitual practice, we

\* Gen. xxviii. 18.

† Jos. iii. 1; vi. 12; vii. 16; viii. 10.

‡ 1 Sam. xvii. 20.

•• Matt. xxviii. 1.

† Exod. xxiv. 4.

§ 1 Sam. xv. 12.

¶ Dan. vi. 19.

learn from the statement—"Thus did Job continually."\*

There are many references in the Psalms to morning devotion : "My voice," says David, "shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."† "I will sing of thy power, yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning."‡ "I cried unto thee—I prevented (anticipated) the dawning of the morning."§ The votaries of a false religion, the Mohammedans, at the hour of sunrise, are called to prayers : their muezzins are heard, crying out from the tops of their mosques, "Come to prayers,"—"Prayer is better than sleep."

The light of the returning day will unveil to a devotional mind fresh evidences of the Divine benignity ; and prompt it to the exercise of gratitude to the great Governor of the universe, in obedience to whose appointment "day and night shall not cease, while the earth remaineth." "The Lord's mercies," says the prophet, "they are new every morning."|| For the preservation of life, while the shafts of death have been flying thickly around us,—far more thickly, as a careful calculation proves, by night than by day,—for permission to rest in peace, and repose in safety, while thousands have been houseless and homeless,—for protection from the visitations of disease and the inroads of human violence,—our thank-offerings should be presented

\* Job i. 5.

† Ps. v. 3.

‡ Ps. lix. 16.

§ Ps. cxix. 147.

|| Lam. iii. 23.



to Him who "keepeth Israel." Awaking from sleep, which might have been interrupted by calamity, and banished by pain, our grateful acknowledgments are due to that benign Power who watches over his creatures in their defenceless hours, and who alone makes them "dwell in safety." The first inquiry should be, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" The devout heart will not be at a loss for a ready answer: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name;" "O, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

But besides those individual mercies, of which we are the subjects every morning of our lives, there are others of a more general character, conferred by the alternation of day and night, in which not only our race, but the inferior animals, and the productions of vegetative nature participate.

Every twenty-four hours, the earth accomplishes one revolution upon its own axis; and by this physical law, darkness and light are distributed in regular proportions, to all the inhabitants of our globe. This is a benevolent arrangement of Providence, having a special reference to the benefit of all organized beings, and the perfect development of their powers; seasons of rest and activity are thus marked out for us, by that Being who alone has the wisdom adequate to apportion rightly their duration to the wants of our nature; while, by the succession of light and heat, the various agencies of the vegetable kingdom are quickened and matured.

By the motion of our planet, in this diurnal continuity, a variety of scene is produced, highly gratifying to the intelligent mind; for while the earth is in visible light, the beautiful and sublime features of its surface delight the eye; when, on the contrary, the shades of night begin to envelope us, the splendid luminaries of the starry sphere emerge from their concealment. If this motion was to cease, the most disastrous consequences to the numerous existences in our world would ensue. Perpetual day would reign in one hemisphere, and perpetual darkness in another,—an arrangement which would soon be fatal to both animal and vegetable life. One region would be given up to excessive heat, and another to insufferable cold; and under the scorching effects of the one, and the rigour of the other, the earth would cease to be fertile, vegetation would languish, and the races of men and animals gradually become extinct.

The regularity with which the day returns and the night recedes, is a marvellous instance of the skill and wisdom of the divine Creator. In order to perform one revolution in twenty-four hours, our huge globe must turn round at the rate of 1000 miles an hour, or rather more than 16 miles every minute. This is a celerity which at once overwhelms our faculties; and the undeviating exactness with which it is done, places the power and skill of the supreme Director before us, in a most imposing aspect. Our globe, of nearly 8000 miles in diameter, never alters the rate of its diurnal motion; it

experiences no interruption in its progress, its speed is never increased, it is never diminished ; the morning breaks over the eastern hills, and the day declines behind the western, at precisely the same point of time now, as in "the years of many generations." If its velocity was uncertain, the length of our day would be uncertain likewise,—a circumstance which would be productive of the greatest inconvenience : a greater speed would shorten it, —lesser would prolong it. But with such astonishing precision has the Divine power been exerted, that during the six thousand years in which our planet has revolved, the natural day has every where preserved the same uniform duration ; the records of history have preserved no instance of extension or diminution ; and hence, the periods of sunrise and sunset in the different quarters of the globe, are the subject, before-hand, of nice and accurate calculation. When, then, we rise from our pillows, and see the landscapes of our beautiful earth spread out distinctly before our gaze, which when we lay down to rest were mantled with darkness—when we reflect that during our hours of inaction and unconsciousness, the power of the great Lord of nature has been exerted to carry us round in safety several thousands of miles, in order that our eyes might again behold the light, this manifestation of his greatness should dispose our souls to reverence, while the view which it affords of his goodness inspires gratitude, and of his faithfulness promotes confidence.

“Truly,” says an inspired speaker, “light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.”\* The sentiment of the royal moralist is readily admitted; but seldom is the importance of the benefit it recognises appreciated as it ought to be—seldom is any just apprehension of its value entertained. For “all the blessings of the light” we offer thanks in one of our fine old hymns; but the commonness of these blessings diminishes our sense of obligation, and often causes them to be entirely overlooked. If, by some change in the laws of the physical world, or some derangement in our visual organs, “days of darkness” were appointed unto us,—if, instead of the regular recurrence of the morning’s dawn, after a few hours of gloom, the return of light was occasional and completely uncertain,—we should have a far more vivid conception of its value; the increased suspension or partial withdrawal of the beautiful and glorious illumination, would bring us to a proper appreciation of its worth. When the Saviour, on one occasion, restored sight to two blind men, he “straitly charged them” (or he threatened them severely, as the original signifies), that they should keep the miracle secret; but instead of doing this, they published it abroad “throughout all that country.” Ecstatic feelings of joy and gratitude led them to overstep the bounds of duty; but, unjustifiable as was their conduct, it

\* Eccles. xi. 7.

admits of some apology, acting, as they did, under those deep impressions of obligation which a gift so distinguished would produce. Of the evidences of the Divine existence with which we are supplied by the external world, the blind are unconscious; "seasons return, but not to them returns day, or the soft approach of morn or eve or human face divine:" the varied aspects of surrounding nature are to them invisible, and utterly illegible is that inscription of His "eternal power and Godhead," which the great Architect of the universe has written upon the works of his hands. The deprivations under which they suffer who have the misfortune to be deprived of sight, illustrate the advantages bestowed upon us by the "greater light that rules the day," by whose presence the scenes of natural beauty and magnificence around us are rendered visible. Affectingly does Milton paint the condition of Samson in his blindness,—a theme upon which he could write and speak feelingly:—

"O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!  
 Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,  
 Dungeon or beggary, or decrepit age!  
 Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,  
 And all her various objects of delight  
 Annulled which might in part my grief have eased,  
 Inferior to the vilest now become  
 Of man or woman; the vilest here excel me:  
 They creep, yet see: I dark in light, exposed  
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,  
 Within doors or without, still as a fool,  
 In power of others, never in my own;  
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.  
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,

Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse  
Without all hope of day !  
O first-created Beam, and thou great Word,  
'Let there be light, and light was over all,'  
Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree ?  
The sun to me is dark  
And silent as the moon,  
When she deserts the night,  
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave."

Contemplating, then, in the morning's dawn, the hills, the vales, the woods, the streams, the fields, and flocks, we should associate the duties of piety with the pleasures of taste; and whilst we repeat the sentiment of Solomon—"Truly light is sweet," we should offer praise to Him who fixed the sun in the firmament, and now, as heretofore, causes his rays to operate with such wonderful and beneficial effect upon the ethereal fluid, called into existence with such commanding dignity —

"Elohim said, 'LIGHT BE,' and Light was."

The researches that have been made in modern times in vegetable physiology, have clearly manifested the important uses of the solar light, in the growth and fructification of vegetable productions. By favouring the assimilation of carbonic acid gas in plants, it gives them the faculty of becoming green, and of forming the volatile and aromatic principles. Ripe seeds have never been obtained from plants kept in darkness; vegetables reared in the open air, and transported to a dark place, become pale in two or three hours. The light of a lamp is capable of supplying that of

the sun, though in a very imperfect manner: the plant becomes green, and directs itself towards the lamp, as M. Leuchs has shown by a beautiful experiment. It is an invariable circumstance, that plants always turn their stem and leaves to the light, and even when forcibly turned from it, they will gradually revert back. That heat will not produce this effect has been proved by Bonnet, who placed some plants in a heated stove, yet the stems did not incline to the side of the greatest heat, but to a small opening of the stove, from which some rays from the burning fuel issued. Many plants close their flowers and droop their leaves,—as the daisy and convolvulus,—when the light departs, and expand and raise them as the morning dawns. Both Pliny and Theophrastus mention the lotus of the Euphrates, as sinking below the water at night, to rise above it and expand its blossoms as the sun returns. From these facts and repeated experiments it is proved, that the presence of light, in its active state, is essential to the perfectibility of the vegetable kingdom; nay, M. Leuchs supposes, that without the light of the moon and stars, vegetables would be destroyed by the influence of the night.

Another instance of the beneficial influence of the solar light, is supplied by the process of evaporation. “The waters,” says Job, “fail from the sea:” aqueous particles are constantly ascending from the ocean, rivers, lakes, and moist earth; these are formed by the winds into those clouds, which, in ten thousand fantastic shapes, are wafted

to and fro in our atmosphere, and at length discharge their contents upon the thirsty land. The most active and efficient agent which we know of, employed in this beautiful and benevolent process, is light, with its modifications or associates, heat and electricity. By this agency, mighty masses of waters are exhaled from their bed, in the course of a single day ; they are transformed into a vaporous state, and are again precipitated upon the earth in rain and dew. The annual evaporation from the surface of Great Britain, as estimated by careful calculation, is equal to 32 inches of water. Now, water extended over the surface of our country to the depth of one inch, would amount to 309,696,038,000,000 cubic inches, which is equal to 1,116,931,402,691 imperial gallons, or 4,432,267,461 tons. Multiply this enormous quantity by 32, and we have the prodigious sum of 141,832,558,752 tons of water, ascending in vapour every year from our island. The power of the agent employed in this operation of nature must be tremendous ; but equally for its utility does it command our attention, as for its wondrous potentiality. For supposing this spontaneous evaporation were to cease, the world being deprived of the element that causes it, the "heavens would drop no fatness"—the springs would dry up and the rivers be exhausted—the earth would soon be without any vegetation to adorn its surface, or any living creature to inhabit its wilds ; for the whole water of the globe accumulated in the ocean,



would soon overflow the land, and cover it with an universal deluge.

“The sun knoweth his going down”—“the sun ariseth”—these are every-day phenomena, upon which we too often cast a careless eye, or only look upon them for the gorgeous colouring which they cast over the external world; but it is the province of enlightened piety to regard them as the appointments of the Father of mercies—to study them as visible expressions of His controlling power, contriving skill, and benevolent nature—and to give thanks to Him, of whom alone it can be said, “The day is thine; the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.”\* Those lines of Dr. Watts, which are put into “the mouths of babes and sucklings,” are not unworthy of the Christian philosopher—

“ My God, who makes the sun to know  
His proper hour to rise.”

The highest authority has enjoined us not to allow the displays of the Divine benignity in nature, to pass without record: we are to “consider the lilies how they grow”—to “behold the figtree and all the trees;” and the inspired Psalmist observes, when anticipating the universal recognition of Jehovah’s dominion, “Thy saints shall bless thee: they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy POWER: to make known to the sons of men his MIGHTY ACTS.”†

\* Ps. civ. 19, 22; lxxiv. 16.

† Ps. cxlv. 10—12.

But in the morning, in the exercise of religious duty, we have not only to offer thanksgiving for past and present mercies, but to commit ourselves by prayer afresh to the Divine protection and guidance, and to seek the blessing of God upon the concerns of the day before us. If, with no other guide than our own sagacity, we plunge into the turmoil and business of life, we shall certainly stray from the path of safety and of peace, grieve the Spirit, offend conscience, and prepare for ourselves a cup of bitterness. The Psalmist sought the direction of his God in the opening morn, that he might be enabled to "behave himself wisely in a perfect way." "Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust; cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee."

In the world, we meet with influences hostile to the "wisdom which is pure, peaceable, and gentle;" we have tendencies within us prone to give them a friendly greeting, and to prevent the formation of a renewed fellowship with the "beggary elements" around us, the controlling and sanctifying power of Divine grace must be sought, in humble and in fervent prayer. "Hold thou me up," says one, "and I shall be safe: be thou my arm every morning." If thus we go forth into the scenes of active life, in the strength of the Lord of hosts, we shall be kept from many an error which otherwise in our heedlessness we should commit, and be saved from many a pang of grief; our character will be

preserved from receiving unsightly blemishes in an association with the objects of time and sense; we shall “walk through the fire and not be burned”—live in an evil world without contracting its evils. The secret of our peace and safety lies in that aphorism of the Apostle’s—“our sufficiency is of God.” A practical recognition of the sentiment will lead us to prepare, in the commencing day, to discharge its duties, and to meet its dangers—to put on in the closet heavenly armour for every encounter with the foe—and sedulously to seek that grace which will teach us to suffer losses with submission—to bear crosses with meekness, and enable us, “whether we live” through the day, “to live unto the Lord,” or “whether we die” during its continuance, “to die unto the Lord.”

The sentiments so beautifully expressed in one of the ancient hymns of the Romish Church, are peculiarly appropriate for morning devotion :

“ Now morn’s star hath woke from sleep,  
 Let us at his footstool pray,  
 That he would our pathway keep,  
 Light unborn ! our better day !  
 That hand or tongue this day do nought of ill,  
 Nor aught of vanity the bosom fill —  
 Truth, calm and free,  
 On our lips be,  
 And on our heart’s throne sit meek Charity. }

“ While this day shall onward roll,  
 From the cruel foe’s dark hate  
 Keep the sentry of our soul—  
 Of our senses keep the gate.  
 That this day’s service to thy praise may be,  
 And as it is begun, so end in thee;

Nor pride unwind  
The treacherous mind,  
But self-control the rebel spirit bind.

“ Oh! let us die from this world's vanity,  
With thee to rise, and treasure have on high  
Singing of thee  
The Eternal Three—  
Singing of thee everlastingly !”

If when the morning dawns around us, devotion greets its beams with a morning sacrifice, so when the shades of EVENING gather, there will be a devout acknowledgment of the hand of Him who, with such gentleness and admirable regularity, draws the curtains of the night. For our preservation from the “arrow that flieth by day” we give thanks, and for protection from the “pestilence that walketh in darkness” we make supplication.

The evening devotions of the Saviour are occasionally referred to in the narratives of the Evangelists. Previous to the appointment of the twelve apostles, he retired to a mountain, and “continued all night in prayer to God;” doubtless commending those whom he was about to select to the protection of the Father, and seeking for them every requisite qualification and assistance, by a solemn application to God. It was night when he was “in an agony and prayed more earnestly.” Towards the close of his life, we are informed, that “in the day-time he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and abode in the Mount of Olives.” This does not mean that he spent the night homeless and houseless: but that, as the evening drew on, he

withdrew to Bethany, to the house of Lazarus, the pathway to which lay across the olive mountain. But what were the occupations of the Saviour during his nightly walk to his village friends? Something more than watching the moonbeams play upon the pinnacles of the temple, and the stars look down from their spheres upon the valley of Jehoshaphat: with peculiar emphasis he could say, "I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law."

"The close of the day, when the hamlet is still," has ever been a favourite period with the wise and good of all nations. The bustle of life is over; the tumult of the world is still; from the distracting cares of business we have a respite; and the calm and holy placidity which is spread over the universal face of nature, disposes the mind to reflection and to serious thought. The external world then presents ample materials to invite attention, and to improve as well as interest the observer; adorable displays of the Creator's power and wisdom are spread around us: and as the book of nature has been written by the same hand, and for the same purpose, as the book of revelation, the joint reading of these two great volumes is a devotional exercise which may profitably occupy a place in the "evening sacrifice."

"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." While there is "one glory of the sun," which shines forth by day, there is "another glory of the moon and of the stars," which

becomes visible by night ; and as night and day follow each other in regular succession, the task of manifesting the grandeur of the Creator is never interrupted—the provision which inanimate nature offers for contemplation and devotion is never withdrawn. That marvellous display of the agency of the Deity, which the heavens at night disclose, presents a most sublime and profitable subject of study, which has interested, gratified, and improved the mind, when an intellectual taste has been united to a devotional spirit. “Isaac went out into the field to meditate at eventide ;” and David appears to have been similarly engaged, when he indited the eighth psalm. Contemplating the magnificence of the widely-extended firmament, the moon walking in brightness, and the stars of varying magnitude and splendour shining round her path ;—associating this view of material nature with the arrangements of providence and grace, the Psalmist was astonished at such an exhibition of the majesty and mercy of the great Lord of all ; and therefore exclaimed, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained : what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ?”

In a most impressing manner does the night “show forth knowledge” of that omnipotent energy which resides in the Eternal Mind. Gazing upon the starry sky, we behold bodies a thousand times larger than our world, impelled with the same inconceivable rapidity as our globe, through the

mighty expanse of the universe. The distances at which the orbs that form our system are placed, and the enormous spaces through which they travel, are facts too sublime for words to express, or our ideas to conceive. The nearest planet to the sun is separated from him more than thirty millions of miles; but amazing as is this distance, it dwindles into nothing when compared with the remote circuit of Uranus, upwards of sixteen hundred millions of miles from him. The elliptical circle in which Saturn moves, is one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight millions of miles in diameter, and therefore circumscribes an area of five thousand millions of miles. Vast, however, as is the space which our system occupies, it is but a small and insignificant section of the universe. Above one hundred thousand stars, apparently suns like ours, shine over our heads; and the distance is so immense between us, that no fixed star can be made to give a parallax, by the most powerful instruments.

Astronomers have no means, as yet, of ascertaining the precise distance of any of the fixed stars; but the calculation which establishes them at an inconceivable distance is entirely satisfactory, and may be readily understood. Our earth is at an average distance of ninety-five millions of miles from the sun; it follows, therefore, that at one period of the year, she must be nearer those fixed stars which lie in the plane of her orbit than at another, by double that distance, or one hundred

and ninety millions of miles. It has, however, been found that an approach of this immense amount does not make the slightest perceptible alteration in the apparent size of these bodies,—a conclusive proof that one hundred and ninety millions of miles is but a point, in comparison with the space which intervenes between us and them. Professor Whewell has ingeniously illustrated the relative proportions and distances of the bodies connected with our system. Supposing the earth to be a globe, a foot in diameter, the distance of the sun from the earth will be about two miles, his diameter rather more than a hundred feet, and consequently his bulk such as might be made up of two hemispheres, each about the size of the dome of St Paul's. The distance of the moon from us will be thirty feet, her diameter three inches, and her size about that of a cricket-ball. The sun would thus occupy much more than all the space within the moon's orbit. Jupiter, on the same scale, would be about ten miles from the sun; Uranus, forty; and probably, if all distances were thus diminished, no star would be nearer to such a one-foot earth, than the moon now is to us. To restore the earth to its true dimensions, we must magnify the supposed model forty millions of times, and to preserve the proportions, we must increase equally the distances of the sun and of the stars from us.

Piety will regard this immense field of existence, laid open to our view by the returning night, as a scene where the Divine potentiality is continually



operating ; and the Creator will be aggrandized in the estimation of the creature, by this display of his boundless domains. When we see Jupiter, on a calm clear evening, glowing vividly in the infinity above us, we see an object that is twelve times larger than our earth, and four hundred and eighty-seven millions of miles distant from the spot on which we stand. At such a moment, the devout mind will recur to the sentiment of inspiration,—“Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!” Such a scene will illustrate the goodness of the great First Cause, in endowing man with faculties by which he can appreciate the grandeur of his creation—trace the operation of his laws—and measure the magnitude of his works. The word of revelation too, will rise in value, because of its assurances and proofs, that we, “who are but of yesterday,” are not overlooked by Him who “made all these things;” and that the power and majesty they unveil to us, is in ceaseless operation for the benefit of those that “hope in his mercy.” He who formed “Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades,” and upholds them by the word of his power, is represented as making the “clouds” in our atmosphere “his chariot,” and “riding upon the wings” of our winds. Impressive lessons of humility are also taught, when

“Isaac-like, the solitary saint  
Walks forth to meditate at eventide.”

The great truth presents itself to our minds in all its reality and power, that we cannot, “by searching,

find out God"—that, far as we may penetrate into the depths of space, there is a barrier over which no energy of ours, mental or physical, will ever be able to carry us—and that if the "things that are seen" in a thousand points baffle our comprehension, and defy our investigation, much more "past finding out" is He, "the King eternal, immortal, and INVISIBLE," whom "no man hath seen at any time."

The Jewish prophet calls upon us to contemplate the splendid machinery of the heavens, and to recognise the matchless power of the Mechanist:—

"Lift up your eyes on high ;  
And see, who hath created these.  
He draweth forth their armies by number ;  
He calleth them all by name :  
Through the greatness of his strength and the mightiness of his power,  
Not one of them faileth to appear."\*

Strikingly as the night illustrates the power of the Creator, it bears equal testimony to his goodness and wisdom. Various benevolent purposes are effected by its return. The earth, which in some countries is seldom watered by the rains of heaven, is then cooled and refreshed with fertilizing dews ; night comes with its humid atmosphere, to moisten the parched soil, and to render vegetative nature flourishing, when otherwise it would droop and die.

At stated periods all animals require the refreshments of rest and sleep : fatigued with the busy concerns and active engagements of life, man stands in need of repose. This is the case with every class

\* Isaiah xl. 26.

of beings in animated nature,—with the birds of the air, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; and night has been graciously appointed by God as a season of rest, to invigorate the animal frame, recruit its energies, and prepare it for a continuation of its toils. In the regular return of this interval, the wants of the human constitution have been studied; and both its periodical recurrence, and its duration, have been adjusted by the great Disposer, with reference to the welfare of the organized beings he has called into existence. A labourer may indeed encroach upon the night, and continue his toils after its shades have gathered, without inconvenience; but this can only be done where the frame is hardy, the labour not severe; and, even with these circumstances favourable to exertion, rest is imperative after the lapse of fifteen or sixteen hours. The constitution would be undermined, and the human powers would droop, if our day were extended to the length of two, and thus the period be prolonged between the intervals of rest. The most eminent physiologists are agreed, that the season which nature marks out for activity, cannot be lengthened or shortened to any extent, without injury. “We may be tolerably certain,” says Mr. Whewell, “that a constantly recurring period of forty-eight hours would be too long for one day of employment, and one period of sleep, with our present faculties; and all whose bodies and minds are tolerably active, will probably agree that, independently of habit, a perpetual alternation of eight

hours up and four in bed, would employ the human powers less advantageously and agreeably than an alternation of sixteen and eight. A creature which could employ the full energies of his mind and body uninterruptedly for nine months, and then take a single sleep of three months, would not be a man." We have here, then, another proof of a benevolent Intelligence, active in the arrangements of the material world, adjusting the diurnal revolution of the earth to the physical condition of its inhabitants.

But besides these manifestations of God in nature, there are numerous other lessons which a pious mind will learn from its phenomena, which, properly attended to, will exercise a salutary influence upon the heart and life. While the alternation of day and night speaks to the ear of religion of the power and goodness of the Deity, the same alternation proclaims, with an impressive voice, the change which attends the course of human existence. Transient and rapidly fleeting as is the light of day, it is an appropriate emblem of the life of man : for, even as the glorious sun retires from our gaze, and the green-clad hills, and the beautiful flowers that gem the earth, cease to be palpable to the eye, so do the fairest scenes of human enjoyment terminate, and the forms and faces of those we love pass from us to be no more seen.

In strict analogy with the experience of the external world, are the circumstances of social, civil, and political life:—"there is no abiding," says the

Psalmist of Israel ;—a sentiment which the Persian poet, Saady, recognises in an impressive couplet :—

“ The spider holds the veil in the palace of Cæsar,  
The owl stands sentinel on the watch-tower of Afrasiab.”

In the estimation of some, it may indicate a cynical turn of mind to recur to such sentiments as these ; but it by no means supposes a gloomy temperament to be alive to the changes that occur around us, and to “ point a moral ” from them ; both piety and a rational judgment will vindicate the wisdom of so profiting by the mutability of time, as to repose upon the immutability of eternity.

In reality, that very phenomenon in the external world, which reminds a religious man of natural decay and certain dissolution, will direct his thoughts to the “ hope of eternal life.” The sun in his setting does not quench his light ; when invisible to us, he becomes apparent to others, and goes forth “ in his might ” to other regions which saw him not when we did. This is the ordinary course of nature : the spring returns, the trees bud afresh, the flowers expand in loveliness, and the golden harvests of the autumn again wave in the passing winds ; and thus the same silent preacher that proclaims our dissolution, speaks with the same precision our immortality. The light of the christian revelation enables us to put a consoling interpretation upon the decay and revival of nature, and to regard these physical facts as intimations of that grand truth of revelation—immortality.

The object for which the preceding considerations

have been advanced, is to inculcate the sentiment expressed by the Psalmist in his pious exclamation, "Lord, how manifold are thy works ! In wisdom hast thou made them all ;" as well as to show that it is nature's province, not only to unfold scenes of beauty to the eye, but to propose moral lessons to the mind ; and that the attitude therefore which man should assume, ought to be that of a scholar as well as an admirer. There is something captivating and exciting to a refined mind, in the frequent calmness of the summer's eve, the stillness into which animated nature is lulled as the night approaches, and the magnificent glories which blaze forth from the vault of heaven. But we are in danger of admiring only the wonderful skill and beauty so profusely lavished upon the creation around us, without thinking of Him from whom it all proceeds, and seeking in nature nothing further than sensorial gratification and intellectual pleasure. It is when every witnessed specimen of skill and adaptation elevates our thoughts to the great Source of being, that we rightly employ the material world he has created, and the senses which he has given. And never do these claims of devotion deaden our sensibilities, or dim our perceptions to external beauty ; but leave the mind alive to the loveliness of its aspect, and the grace of its configuration. I can say, with a writer of revelation, "Praise ye the Lord, which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is ;" and yet luxuriate, with Claude, in the summer landscape, or admire the descriptions which the

poets have given of the silent night. As Apollonius Rhodius, in one of the most highly-finished scenes in the poetry of antiquity :—

“ Night on the earth pour'd darkness; on the sea  
The wakesome sailor to Orion's star  
And Helice turned heedful. Sunk to rest  
The traveller forgot his toil; his charge  
The sentinel; her death-devoted babe  
The mother's painless breast. The village dog  
Had ceased his troublous bay. Each busy tumult  
Was hush'd at that dead hour; and darkness slept,  
Lock'd in the arms of silence. She alone,  
Medea, slept not.”\*

And Milton, picturing the night on which the Saviour was born :—

“ But peaceful was the night,  
Wherein the Prince of Light  
His reign of peace upon the earth began :  
The winds, with wonder whist,†  
Smoothly the waters kist,  
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,  
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.  
“ The stars, with deep amaze,  
Stand fix'd in stedfast gaze,  
Bending one way their precious influence;  
And will not take their flight,  
For all the morning light,  
Or Lucifer, that often warn'd them thence;  
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,  
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.”

But whilst, with the devout men of past ages, an hour may be profitably employed in meditating “in the eventide” upon the magnificent productions of the Creator's power, there are personal blessings and interests which demand attention, and which, whenever duly estimated, will inspire praise, and call to prayer. For preservation during the

\* Apoll. Argonaut.

† Silenced.

departed day, for temporal comforts continued from its commencement to its close, the heart should offer its thanksgivings: and when we consider our innumerable instances of misimprovement, the sins that have marked the past, the imperfections that have attended our best services, the enlightened mind will apply to the "blood of sprinkling," and appeal to its God for pardon and for peace. About once more to be committed to the defencelessness of sleep, the safeguard of his defence and the assurances of his favour should be sought, that, if the mandate be heard, "This night thy soul is required of thee," the summons may be met in the lofty attitude which religion inspires. "Tell me," says Chrysostom, "with what confidence canst thou lie down to sleep, and pass away the darkness of the night, unless thou shalt first arm thyself by fervent and devout prayer?"\*

The "night watches" are mentioned by the Psalmist as seasons of devotional duty and enjoyment; and hours of wakefulness, when grief has banished repose, have often been advantageously employed in the exercises of religion. The prophet thus calls upon afflicted Zion: "Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord."† That divine visitation, so wonderfully described in the book of Job, took place in the night:—

"Now to me a word was spoken in secret;  
Mine ear received a murmuring thereof;

\* Chrys. de Orando Deum.

† Lam. ii. 19.



In the ecstasy of visions of the night,  
 When deep sleep falleth on men.  
 Fear came upon me and trembling,  
 And the multitude of my bones did shake;  
 And a spirit passed before my face;  
 The hair of my flesh stood on end.  
 It stood, but I could not distinguish its form,  
 A figure before mine eyes—  
 Silence—then I heard a voice—  
 Shall a mortal be righteous before God?  
 Shall man be pure before his Maker?  
 Lo! in his servants he hath not trusted,  
 Nor given glory to his angels;  
 How then to the dwellers in houses of clay?\*

The earliest specimen which we have of Saxon poetry is a metrical version of some portions of sacred history, by Cædmon, a pious monk of Whitby, in the seventh century. The following fragment of his, on waking in a stall of oxen, which he had been appointed to guard during the night, has been preserved in King Alfred's Saxon translation of Bede's Ecclesiastical History.

“ Now we should praise  
 The Guardian of the heavenly kingdom;  
 The mighty Creator,  
 And the thoughts of his mind,  
 Glorious Father of his works!  
 As he, of every glory  
 Eternal Lord!  
 Established the beginning;  
 So he first shaped  
 The earth for the children of men,  
 And the heavens for its canopy.  
 Holy Creator!  
 The middle region,  
 The Guardian of mankind,  
 The eternal Lord,  
 Afterwards made  
 The ground for men,  
 Almighty Ruler!”

\* Job iv. 12—19.

It cannot be questioned but that the night-vigils of Cædmon's time were the offspring of superstitious notions,—a superior efficacy being attributed at such a season to prayer and praise, as involving bodily mortification; yet, when the repose of night is broken in upon by care, or sickness, or any other circumstance, the engagements of devotion will commend themselves to enlightened piety and sanctified feeling. “When I awake,” says one, “I am still with Thee!” Baxter, speaking of his own practice of nightly prayer, observes: “Concerning the time of this duty every man is the meetest judge for himself. Only give me leave to tender you my observation, which time I have always found fittest for myself; and that is the evening, from sunset to twilight; and sometimes in the *night when it is warm and clear*. Whether it be any thing from the temperature of my body, I know not; but I conjecture that the same time would be seasonable to most tempers, for several natural reasons, which I will not now stand to mention. Neither would I have mentioned my own experience in this, but that I was encouraged hereunto, by finding it suit with the experience of a better and wiser man than myself, and that is Isaac. And his experience I dare more boldly recommend to you than my own.”\*

\* Practical Works, iii. p. 276.

## CONCLUSION.

IN the course of the preceding illustrations and records of the duties of devotion, we have had occasion to observe a practical attention to them in the life of the Saviour—THE CHRISTIAN PATTERN; we have noticed Him observing the Sabbath, reading the Scriptures, attending public worship, engaging in prayer and praise, and at the morning and evening sacrifice performing the offices of piety. “Learn of me,” is still his injunction to his followers, as it was to the thousands gathered around him in the wilderness of Judea: he teaches by his example; and, studying its holy and attractive character, we are instructed how to “behave wisely in a perfect way.” The path of spiritual prosperity is not of difficult discovery. “Walk even as Christ also walked.” The record of his life is a pillar of fire and cloud, conducting those who follow it to the “land of uprightness.” If in any humble degree we “walk with God,” as he did—if we love the habitation of his house, and prize the hour of devotional retirement—we shall not be “barren nor unfruitful,” but “abound in every good word and work.” The throne of grace will exercise a magnetic influence upon the seeking and waiting soul, detaching it from the vanities of earth, and directing

its desires and tendencies towards the sublime realities of heaven : association with God will produce conformity to " his own image," which will be confirmed and increased according to the constancy of the intercourse, and the degree of the intimacy.

It should be the grand aim of every Christian, to " set the Lord (Christ) always before him," and to seek the unction of the Holy One ; " to purify himself even as he is pure." Parental care should also be early occupied in making the youthful mind acquainted with him, who, when a " child, grew in favour with God," and who, in the maturity of his days, expressly commanded a group of Jewish children to be brought unto him, that he might bless them. The duties of personal and family religion being thus observed, gracious principles will grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength ; life will advance in piety as it advances in duration ; and if " grey hairs" are seen upon us, they will be " a crown of glory, being found in the paths of righteousness."

The duties of devotion are the most sublime occupations in which intelligent creatures can engage ; for when melody is made with the heart unto the Lord,—when prayer is fervent and effectual,—it is not " bodily exercise" that is offered : the creature sinks into nothingness, and the Creator is all in all ; there is Divinity within us, holding communion with Divinity without us. If, as the Scriptures assert, God " worketh in us both to will and to do ;" if he takes up his abode with us ; if

the soul becomes his temple; then true prayer and praise are his interior movements,— God in action in the inner man, seeking God in gracious manifestation. It is a profound observation of Tholuck's, that "in those moments when the soul turns with deepest ardour to its original, it is not that which is human in man that rises God-ward, but the Divine Spirit in the human breast which seeks to meet God." He illustrates this sentiment by a reference to the Letters of Plato, preserved in Origen, who seems to have had some idea of the christian doctrine of the indwelling of the Deity. Intimations of this noble truth of divine revelation frequently appear in the writings of the close thinkers of eastern climes. Thus, at the opening of that extraordinary poem, The Methnewi, its author, Dschelaleddin Rumi, exclaims:—

"Now from the body's thralldom broke the spirit daringly:  
Ha! 'tis the *scent of Joseph's robe* \* I feel approaching nigh!"

Of a Mohammedan saint, Dakuki, he thus sings:—

"O never think a prayer like this like other prayer; for know  
*It is not mortal man, but God, from whence the accents flow.*  
*Behold, God prays!* the lowly saint stands deep abashed the while;  
And God who gave the humbled mind, upon his prayers will smile."

This is the sublime sentiment which the apostle discloses in the memorable passage: "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered:" a fact which, whenever

\* The symbol of Deity.

realized, may minister consolation to the pious mind, involving in it, as it does, the assurance, that all the high and important purposes of prayer are answered, even when nothing objective is attained by it. This is finely expressed in the Methnewi, in a passage which displays a profound acquaintance with experimental theology.

"Allah ! was all night long, the cry of one oppressed with care,  
Till softened was his heart, and sweet became his lips with prayer.  
Then near the subtle tempter stole, and spake, 'Fond babbler, cease,  
For not one, *Here am I*, has God ere sent to give thee peace.'  
With sorrow sank the suppliant's heart, and all his senses fled,  
But, lo ! at midnight, Chiser\* came, and gently spake and said,  
'What ails thee now, my child, and whence art thou afraid to pray !  
And why thy former love dost thou repent, declare and say.'  
'Ah !' cries he, 'Never once to me, spake God, *Here am I*, son ;  
Cast off, methinks, I am, and warned far from his gracious throne.'  
To whom, Elias, 'Hear, my son, the word from God I bear,  
Go tell—he said—yon mourner sunk in sorrow and despair,  
Each *Lord appear* thy lips pronounce, contains my *Here am I*,  
A special messenger of love I send, beneath thine every sigh.  
Thy love is but a girdle of the love I bear to thee,  
And sleeping in thy *Come, O Lord*, there lies, *Here, Son*, from me.'"

"Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace," seeking "a right way for us, and our little ones ;" for "the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him ; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." If, in the spirit of faith, humility, and reverence, the means of grace, public and private, are used, they will be conduits of heavenly influence to the soul, communicating strength to its weakness, comfort to its sorrows, and peace to its fears ; making it as a

\* The name of Elias, whom the Easterns regard as the counsellor of mankind.

well-watered garden, rich with the fruits and fragrant with the odours of holiness. The same word that promises the "dew unto Israel," declares that, as a consequence of its reception, "he shall grow as the lily, and spread forth his roots as Lebanon." Habits of devotion here will prepare for loftier engagements hereafter; Sabbath services will become heavenly preparations; the sanctuary below will be the portal to the sanctuary above; and ultimately, as one of old finely remarks, "our churches will be exchanged for thrones, and our chapels for seats placed before the Lamb, in the eternal temple of the celestial Jerusalem."

THE END.







